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The
School for Scandal

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

With an Introduction by
SIR LAURENCE OLIVIER

and designs for decor & costumes by
CECIL BEATON



THE FOLIO SOCIETY

London 1949

This edition of *The School for Scandal* has been composed in 12 on 14 Baskerville type, printed, and bound, by W. & J. Mackay & Co., Ltd., of Chatham. The text here used is that edited by R. Crompton Rhodes by permission of Basil Blackwell.

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Introduction

‘Amidst the mortifying circumstances attendant upon growing old, it is something to have seen *The School for Scandal* in its glory.’ So wrote Charles Lamb in 1823.

At this moment I am writing in my dressing-room in an Australian theatre, one hundred and twenty-five years later, and the wonderful performances which Lamb looked back on, with Jack Palmer and Dodd and Parsons in the cast, now come to life only in the reflection of his pen. Yet I have just left the stage after playing the scene of Sir Peter’s second quarrel with Lady Teazle and, caught up in the enchantment of the comedy, I am prepared to swear that whatever mortifying circumstances attend the life of the Theatre throughout the world, this play will never grow old.

To indicate my own attitude I could be content to echo the words of an earlier actor and manager, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree: ‘Few will dispute that *The School for Scandal* is the most brilliant comedy that has been given to the world.’ But I must add some expression of my own personal predilection for this period, in whose style, atmosphere, behaviour, and theatrical modes and manners, I feel more comfortably at home than any other. And in the eighteenth century I feel drawn more instinctively to an understanding of the spirit of Sheridan than of anyone else (with the possible exception of Handel in music).

At this present time I am able—to my great enjoyment—to make for the first time a practical study of *The School for Scandal* both as actor and producer. Not that this is an easy task in either rôle. Experience alone can do due justice to the matchless quality of the prose, and treat with proper and judicious comment the deliciously nostalgic atmosphere of the eighteenth-century idiom. Here, in effect, you have a little domestic anecdote, a partial impersonation of real life; yet with no earthiness, not even the mildest bawdiness. It is art rather than nature.

This fact is especially a consideration for the actors, all of whom must find some common ground of feeling for the period, upon which they may build their individual parts. Yet they must realise that these characters

must needs be built not so much up as down, for the polite world of the piece will tempt character to degenerate into cypher unless approached with infinite patience, imagination, and resourcefulness. Here, as in any other dramatist, the poetry of realism must be caught through the verse or prose and then translated into action and performance with a care deriving from a devoted and uncynical understanding of Sheridan's times. It is not easy; Sheridan is not for the beginner or amateur. Nor is he for the stupid folk who would 'guy' him, and attempt to improve him by supposed satirical treatment: he is himself the only satirist needed in his own plays. Sheridan's cunning and deceptive appearance of formal realism can usually be understood only after much acting experience, or, in rare instances, by an instinctive gift for the style. The whole comedy calls for a particular slant of play-acting and one that can generally be realised only when the actor has worked through many other schools and dimensions and styles of acting.

A similar caution must imbue the producer. This play holds a hundred pitfalls for him. Sheridan, with the agile athletics of genius, takes apparent risks of balance with a success which the uninstructed disciple is ill-advised to emulate. The characters seem to veer alarmingly from the artificial to the real; some the author holds up to ridicule and some he clearly likes and sympathises with. (Most people, I am sure, feel conscious, after a first reading, of the sudden gush of warmth and enjoyment in the dialogue that informs the scenes between Sir Oliver and Charles Surface.)

In the same way the different situations, when analysed, seem to belong to different types—to artificial comedy, sentimental comedy, to farce and even to tragedy; and if the producer is not very patient and very careful they will sit in their different bottles, staring obstinately at him and refusing to be co-ordinated. The first scene of all is a particularly difficult problem in this respect. The temptation is for the producer to have recourse to some style or stunt or comment of his own invention, and a host of bright ideas—all of them his, and none of them Sheridan's—hover tantalisingly over the stage. And the temptation to use them is all the greater in this present age when not to be original is not to attract notice. To rest rather upon the author than on his own invention these

days is to lay a producer open to such heinous charges as being 'obstinately traditional' and, therefore, 'uninspired.'

Nevertheless let me place on record my profound belief that it is the producer's duty to regard his author as the all-important lantern along whose beams of light he must look if he is to understand the author's intentions.

Now, having made it clear that I deplore attempts at 'scoring' off Sheridan, or vandalistic methods of improving him, I must make it equally clear that while truth itself does not change, the way in which it may be understood changes considerably from age to age. That may seem speculative theory. But to be severely practical: the interpretive craftsman must make the work of art understood and appreciated in his medium in his day, otherwise he will have failed to illuminate that work of art for the enjoyment of his day. As Polonius nearly said: 'This above all, to thine own *author* be true'; in other words, the producer must develop and satisfy his *instinct* for truth. Then, because he understands the vision of his author, he can reflect it for contemporary appreciation. From this respectful standpoint the conventional treatment may permissibly be subjected to judicious selection. Cutting, for instance, has always been held—quite properly—to be excusable in any dramatic work, and in order to smooth the rough edge of a cut quite elaborate transpositions are imposed more frequently than is realised. It is the spirit in which these things are done that really matters; so long as the producer finds the means, style and atmosphere, by which to present his play truthfully, purely and simply, then the result is likely to commend itself to his audience. This is not to say, of course, that the task must be achieved with simplicity, or that very elaborate ideas and methods may not be employed, but the original inspiration should be clear-cut and single-minded. Even then, each production will vary greatly: I may point out that my handling of the play has been in many ways different and less revolutionary than Sir Herbert Tree's, although his integrity in this matter, as will have been gathered earlier, can be nowise in doubt.

To my mind, the stage machinery of Sheridan's own time is still the best, the simplest and most sympathetic method for the presentation of his plays. I therefore do not hesitate to employ the 'Pollock's Theatre'

convention—i.e., mostly painted backcloths with only essentials by way of practical props and furniture. Without making any derisive comment on it, I think one may fairly infuse a little gentle amusement into the use of this method; in any case for present-day acceptance some variations on the old theme are desirable. For example, audiences now insist on seeing the actors' faces very clearly, and the actors are also accustomed to this. (I often wonder, by the way, how the querulous critics who complain of lack of light when ten or so thousand watts are focused on the stage would have reacted to the few oil floats of Sheridan's day!)

Very little movement or 'business' is indicated in the text, with the exception of the Picture Room Scene and moments such as that when 'the screen is thrown down.' Modern production has developed considerably along the lines of elaborate movement and grouping—a development made necessary by the present-day distaste for static scenes of conversation. In my own production I have tried to compromise by treating certain scenes, which lent themselves happily to it, with the formality of a spaced 'conversation piece' painted by Zoffany and other eighteenth-century artists, with a leavening of other more choreographic moments.

The act-divisions in the original text seem to us curious and rather pointless; the beginnings of the acts are unarresting and the curtains sometimes an anticlimax. Sir Herbert Tree reduced the play from five to four acts, and modern demands reduce it to three or even two. The author himself apparently allotted two days for the duration of the action, but gave this matter very little consideration and only indicated it in passing, in this fashion:

Once, in reply to the servant's whispered message at Lady Sneerwell's soirée, Sir Peter replies 'I'll be with them directly.' This, unless it is merely an arbitrary means of getting Sir Peter off stage, must refer to the arrival at his house of Rowley and Sir Oliver who, as we have been told earlier in the day, 'is at this moment in town.' Again, when Maria enters in Act III, Scene 1, in reply to Sir Peter's question 'Is Mr. Surface returned with you?' she replies demurely 'No, sir, he was engaged.' This pretty reflection on Maria's charitable nature is lost unless she is still in evening

dress from the party, reminding one of Lady Teazle's own curt dismissal of her for the purpose of her own *tête-à-tête* with Joseph.

This theory, however, raises a number of interesting speculations. Sir Oliver's anxiety to get on with the business of testing his nephews' characters surely causes him to go out at a remarkably late hour in the evening for any presumed broker to call? But even if we accept this, what of his avowed intention to go on to see Joseph '*afterwards*' as old Stanley? Now we cannot have Lady Teazle calling on Joseph and the Screen Scene following in the middle of the night, and as this comes before Joseph meets Sir Oliver (alias old Stanley), at the quickest, Sir Oliver's enthusiasm for the game could not bring him to Joseph until the following day. But having gained an interview with Charles at such speed, Sir Oliver obviously would not delay the next stage longer than that. Now then, before the famous Joseph-Lady Teazle meeting, Joseph's servant looks out of the window to espy the visitor and tells his master: 'It is her Ladyship, sir: *she always leaves her chair at the milliner's in the next street,*' which implies many previous meetings of this nature. A further suggestion of this is given by Charles later on in the scene. Yet at Lady Sneerwell's on the previous evening (if it was the previous evening) Joseph asked Lady Teazle: '*When* are you coming to give your judgement on my library as promised?' As Alice would say, 'Curiouser and curiouser!'

At all events, Sheridan obviously was not over-fastidious about matters chronological, and indeed there was no practical reason why he should have been. The candle-power lighting the stage remained constant; there was no visual hint as to the time of day and his audience cannot have been much concerned whether there was or was not.

But this clears the ground for us nowadays to approach the practical problems involved in changing the mood and colour of a scene by use of the sort of lighting to which the modern theatre has—perhaps unconsciously—accustomed us. It also raises the question of costume changes, not merely for purposes of 'production prestige' or to satisfy the sartorial vanity of the players, but because of the desirability of keeping the eye delighted and interested. If we remain convinced of the need for a continuous action over a two-day period, Sir Peter and Lady Teazle

must remain rigidly in formal evening attire right through the first quarrel scene, the Sneerwell party scene, and the second quarrel scene! Moreover, with the exception of the First Scene of Act I in Lady Sneerwell's boudoir, the play must be lit entirely by candlelight until the end of the Picture Room Scene (Act IV, Scene 2), giving us no changes at all in atmosphere, costumes or light. And this, I think, would tend to reduce the comedy's delicacy and subtlety of mood to something like monotony for a modern audience.

I have thought it expedient, therefore, to take my cue from Sheridan's own casualness, and time the play according to my own discretion and the values of the production I envisage, even though this may mean a contrived exit for Sir Peter, and the loss of the only moment of interest that that character of poor Maria might hold for us!

I might venture a comment here upon the general time problem in production. It is generally thought that the shorter the time involved in a play's action, the speedier its effect. (For example, the entire tragedy of 'Othello' takes place in two days.) But I do not think this applies unless the action is extremely rich in events, and the production permits the sequence to be unbroken by many scene changes. 'More haste less speed' applies a little, though in this connection it would be more apt to say 'All speed less tempo.' I have found in the cutting of films that a scene can be given an appearance of greater speed in some circumstances if pauses are *put in* to the dialogue rather than taken out. It is the rhythm that must be captured, and time and speed must only be used for the sake of that rhythm. Therefore the action of a play might appear to pass more quickly sometimes if it involves a longer space of time, because of the chances it gives for increasing the rhythmic result by variations of light, mood and atmosphere.

I need hardly say that in their application to *The School for Scandal* all these principles of production would go for nothing if the acting is not of the highest order.

Styles of acting and production may change, but 'style', in the sense Sheridan understood the word, remains as much the actor's goal now as it was in 1777. Why particularly in 1777? The answer is contained in a faded playbill which is on my table, and which reads:

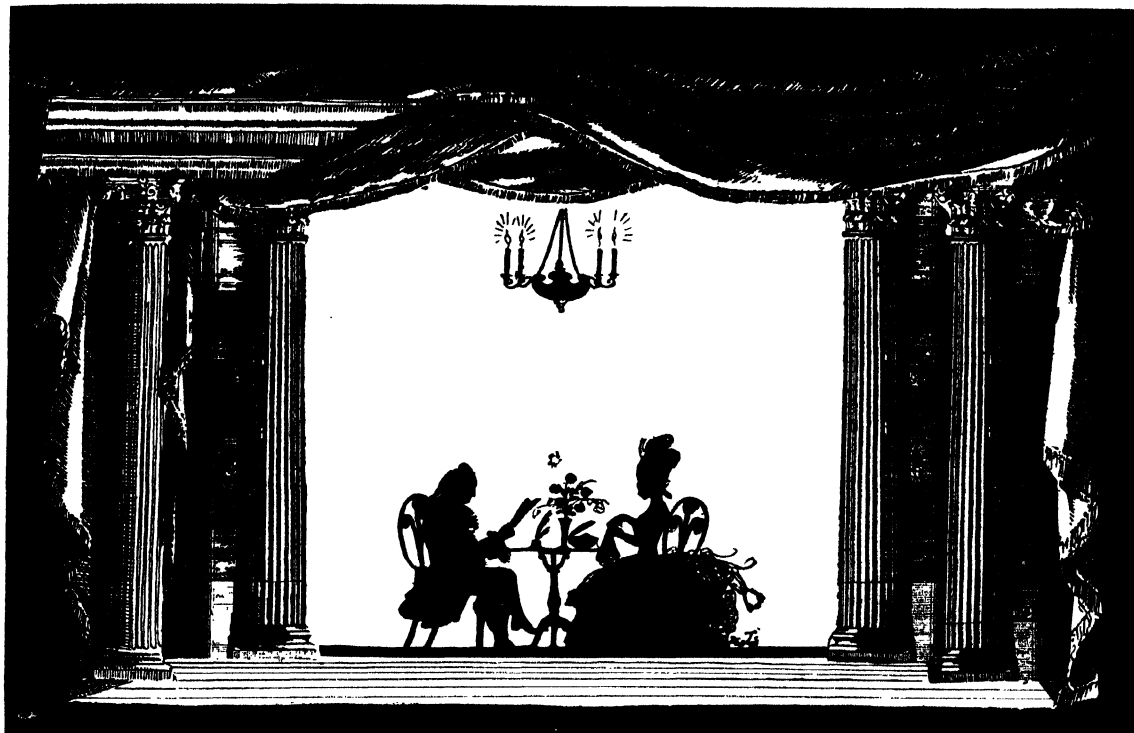
‘At the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane
This present Friday—the 9th of May, 1777
Will be presented A NEW COMEDY call’d THE
SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL.’

Then follows a list of the principal characters and the actors who performed them; the ‘stars’ were Mr. King and Mrs. Abington, who spoke the Prologue and Epilogue respectively. And as one looks at the bill again one notices three words at the top which very likely escape notice on a first reading:

‘PERFORMED BUT ONCE.’

Nowadays these words make us smile. It is impossible to compute the number of times *The School for Scandal* has taken the stage. And it needs no explanation or refurbishing by me or anyone else; it can stand firmly on its own merits, as it has done these hundred and seventy-one years. My own notes are meant especially to help the actors and producers of the play by opening up some practical lines of thought for their consideration. It was, I believe, Benedetto Croce who said that a man who is unable to express himself simply, has nothing to say. This may be true—though truer, perhaps, of the hermit communing with nature in his own breast, than of the man of the theatre trying to recapture the spirit of time past. My own powers of expression may be inadequate; my sincere hope is that they may help the reader of the text that follows to find in Sheridan’s incomparable scenes something of the same inexpressible feeling of fulfilment that possesses at least one humble actor as he feels the play’s life and spirit pulsating through his body and soul.

LAURENCE OLIVIER



1777

Miss Sherry
Mr. Packer
Mr. Palmer
Miss P. Hopkins
Miss Pope
Mr. Parsons
Mr. Dodd
Mr. King
Mr. Aickin
Mrs. Abington
Mr. Yates
Mr. Baddeley
Mr. LaMash
Mr. Smith
Mr. Farren
Mr. Gaudry

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LADY SNEERWELL
SNAKE
JOSEPH SURFACE
MARIA
MRS. CANDOUR
CRABTREE
SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE
SIR PETER TEAZLE
ROWLEY
LADY TEAZLE
SIR OLIVER SURFACE
MOSES
TRIP
CHARLES SURFACE
CARELESS
SIR TOBY BUMPER

1948

Mercia Swinburne
Oliver Hunter
Peter Cushing
Peggy Simpson
Eileen Beldon
Bernard Merefield
Dan Cunningham
Laurence Olivier
Hugh Stewart
Vivien Leigh
George Relph
James Bailey
Robert Beaumont
Terence Morgan
Thomas Heathcote
George Cooper

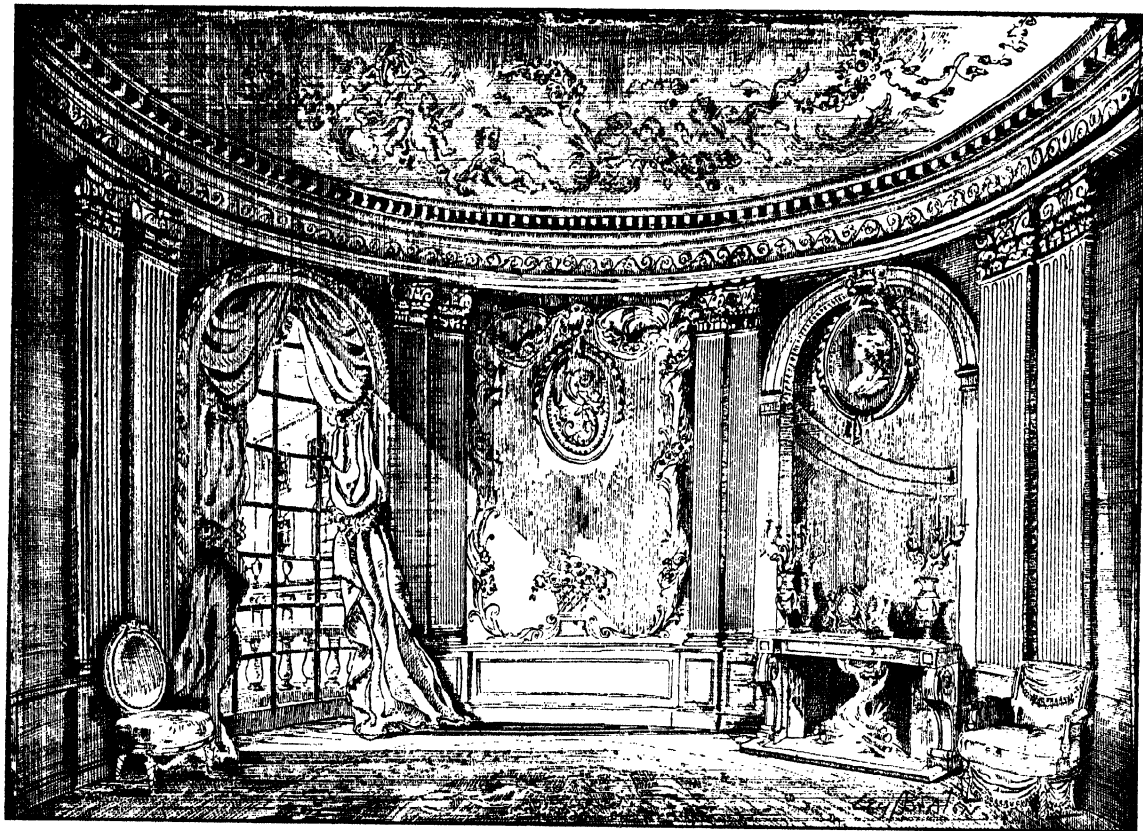
Prologue

Written by Mr. GARRICK

Spoken by SIR PETER TEAZLE

A School for Scandal! Tell me, I beseech you,
Needs there a school—this modish art to teach you?
No need of lessons now;—the knowing think—
We might as well be taught to eat and drink;
Caus'd by a dearth of scandal, should the vapours
Distress our fair ones—let 'em read the papers;
Their powerful mixtures such disorders hit;
Crave what you will—there's *quantum sufficit*.
'Lord!' cries my Lady *Wormwood* (who loves tattle,
And puts much salt and pepper in her prattle),
Just ris'n at noon, all night at cards, when threshing
Strong tea and scandal—'Bless me, how refreshing!
'Give me the papers, *Lisp*—how bold and free! [*sips*]
'Last night Lord L. [*sips*] was caught with Lady D.
'For aching heads what charming *sal volatile*! [*sips*]
'If Mrs B. will still continue flirting,
'We hope she'll *draw*, or we'll *undraw* the curtain.
'Fine satire, poz—in public all abuse it,
'But, by ourselves, [*sips*] our praise we can't refuse it.
'Now, *Lisp*, read you—there, at that dash and star.'
'Yes, ma'am—A certain Lord had best beware,
'Who lives not twenty miles from Grosvenor Square;
'For should he Lady W.—find willing,—
'*Wormwood* is bitter'—'Oh! that's me, the villain!
'Throw it behind the fire, and never more
'Let that vile paper *come within my door*.'
Thus at our friends we laugh, who feel the dart;
To reach *our* feelings, we ourselves must smart.
Is our young bard so young—to think that he

Can stop the full spring-tide of calumny?
Knows he the world so little, and its trade?
Alas! the devil's sooner *rais'd* than *laid*.
So strong, so swift, the monster there's no gagging:
Cut Scandal's head off, still the tongue is wagging.
Proud of your smiles once lavishly bestowed,
Again our young Don Quixote takes the road;
To show his gratitude he draws his pen,
And seeks this Hydra, Scandal, in his den,
[From his fell gripe the frightened fair to save—
Though he should fall th' attempt must please the brave.]
For your applause all perils he would through—
He'll fight—that's write—a cavaliero true,
Till every drop of blood—that's ink—is spilt for you.



LADY SNEERWELL'S HOUSE INTERIOR

ACT THE FIRST

Scene I

Lady Sneerwell's house

Lady Sneerwell at the dressing-table; Mr. Snake drinking chocolate.

Lady Sneerwell The paragraphs, you say, Mr. Snake, were all inserted?

Snake They were, madam; and as I copied them myself in a feigned hand, there can be no suspicion whence they came.

Lady Sneerwell Did you circulate the report of Lady Brittle's intrigue with Captain Boastall?

Snake That's in as fine a train as your ladyship could wish. In the common course of things, I think it must reach Mrs. Clackit's ears within four and twenty hours; and then, you know, the business is as good as done.

Lady Sneerwell Why, truly, Mrs. Clackit has a very pretty talent, and a great deal of industry.

Snake True, madam, and has been tolerably successful in her day. To my knowledge she has been the cause of six matches being broken off, and three sons disinherited; of four forced elopements, and as many close confinements; nine separate maintenances, and two divorces. Nay, I have more than once traced her causing a *tête-à-tête* in the *Town and Country Magazine*, when the parties, perhaps, had never seen each other's face before in the course of their lives.

Lady Sneerwell She certainly has talents, but her manner is gross.

Snake 'Tis very true.—She generally designs well, has a free tongue and a bold invention; but her colouring is too dark, and her outlines often extravagant. She wants that delicacy of tint, and mellowness of sneer, which distinguishes your ladyship's scandal.

Lady Sneerwell You are partial, Snake.

Snake Not in the least—everybody allows that Lady Sneerwell can

ACT I
SCENE I

do more with a word or a look, than many can with the most laboured detail, even when they happen to have a little truth on their side to support it.

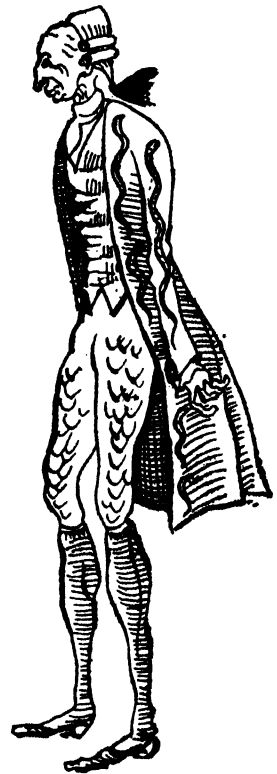
Lady Sneerwell Yes, my dear Snake; and I am no hypocrite to deny the satisfaction I reap from the success of my efforts. Wounded myself in the early part of my life by the envenomed tongue of slander, I confess I have since known no pleasure equal to the reducing others to the level of my own injured reputation.

Snake Nothing can be more natural. But, Lady Sneerwell, there is one affair in which you have lately employed me, wherein, I confess, I am at a loss to guess your motives.

Lady Sneerwell I conceive you mean with respect to my neighbour, Sir Peter Teazle, and his family?

Snake I do. Here are two young men, to whom Sir Peter has acted as a kind of guardian since their father's death; the eldest possessing the most amiable character, and universally well spoken of; the youngest, the most dissipated and extravagant young fellow in the kingdom, without friends or character: the former an avowed admirer of your ladyship's, and apparently your favourite; the latter attached to Maria, Sir Peter's ward, and confessedly beloved by her. Now, on the face of these circumstances, it is utterly unaccountable to me, why you, the widow of a city knight, with a good jointure, should not close with the passion of a man of such character and expectations as Mr. Surface; and more so why you should be so uncommonly earnest to destroy the mutual attachment subsisting between his brother Charles and Maria.

Lady Sneerwell Then at once to unravel this mystery, I must inform you, that love has no share whatever in the intercourse between Mr. Surface and me.



SNAKE

Snake No!

Lady Sneerwell His real attachment is to Maria, or her fortune; but finding in his brother a favoured rival, he has been obliged to mask his pretensions, and profit by my assistance.

Snake Yet still I am more puzzled why you should interest yourself in his success.

Lady Sneerwell How dull you are! Cannot you surmise the weakness which I hitherto, through shame, have concealed even from you? Must I confess, that Charles, that libertine, that extravagant, that bankrupt in fortune and reputation, that he it is for whom I'm thus anxious and malicious, and to gain whom I would sacrifice everything?

Snake Now, indeed, your conduct appears consistent: but how came you and Mr. Surface so confidential?

Lady Sneerwell For our mutual interest. I have found him out a long time since. I know him to be artful, selfish, and malicious—in short, a sentimental knave, while with Sir Peter, and indeed with all his acquaintance, he passes for a miracle of prudence, good sense, and benevolence.

Snake Yes; yet Sir Peter vows he has not his equal in England—and above all, he praises him as a man of sentiment.

Lady Sneerwell True—and with the assistance of his sentiment and hypocrisy, he has brought Sir Peter entirely into his interest with regard to Maria while poor Charles has no friend in the house, though, I fear, he has a powerful one in Maria's heart, against whom we must direct our schemes.

Enter Servant.

Servant Mr. Surface.

Lady Sneerwell Show him up. [*Exit Servant.*] He generally calls about this time. I don't wonder at people giving him to me for a lover.

Enter Joseph Surface.

Joseph Surface My dear Lady Sneerwell, how do you do today? Mr. Snake, your most obedient.

Lady Sneerwell Snake has just been rallying me on our mutual attachment; but I have informed him of our real views. You know

ACT I
SCENE I

how useful he has been to us, and, believe me, the confidence is not ill placed.

Joseph Surface Madam, it is impossible for me to suspect a man of Mr. Snake's sensibility and discernment.

Lady Sneerwell Well, well, no compliments now; but tell me when you saw your mistress, Maria—or, what is more material to me, your brother.

Joseph Surface I have not seen either since I left you; but I can inform you that they never meet. Some of your stories have taken a good effect on Maria.

Lady Sneerwell Ah! my dear Snake! the merit of this belongs to you: but do your brother's distresses increase?

Joseph Surface Every hour. I am told he has had another execution in the house yesterday. In short, his dissipation and extravagance exceed anything I have ever heard of.

Lady Sneerwell Poor Charles!

Joseph Surface True, madam; notwithstanding his vices, one cannot help feeling for him. Aye, poor Charles, indeed! I'm sure I wish it were in my power to be of any essential service to him; for the man who does not share in the distresses of a brother, even though merited by his own misconduct, deserves——

Lady Sneerwell O Lud! you are going to be moral, and forget that you are among friends.

Joseph Surface Egad, that's true!—I'll keep that sentiment till I see Sir Peter;—however, it is certainly a charity to rescue Maria from such a libertine, who, if he is to be reclaimed, can be so only by a person of your ladyship's superior accomplishments and understanding.

Snake I believe, Lady Sneerwell, here's company coming: I'll go and copy the letter I mentioned to you.—Mr. Surface, your most obedient.
[Exit Snake.]

Joseph Surface Sir, your very devoted.—Lady Sneerwell, I am very sorry you have put any further confidence in that fellow.

Lady Sneerwell Why so?

Joseph Surface I have lately detected him in frequent conference with

old Rowley, who was formerly my father's steward, and has never, you know, been a friend of mine.

Lady Sneerwell And do you think he would betray us?

Joseph Surface Nothing more likely:—take my word for't, Lady Sneerwell, that fellow hasn't virtue enough to be faithful even to his own villainy.—Ah! Maria!

Enter Maria.

Lady Sneerwell Maria, my dear, how do you do?—What's the matter?

Maria O there's that disagreeable lover of mine, Sir Benjamin Backbite, has just called at my guardian's, with his odious uncle, Crabtree, so I slipt out, and ran hither to avoid them.

Lady Sneerwell Is that all?

Joseph Surface If my brother Charles had been of the party, madam, perhaps you would have not been so much alarmed.

Lady Sneerwell Nay, now you are severe; for I dare swear the truth of the matter is, Maria heard *you* were here.—But, my dear, what has Sir Benjamin done, that you would avoid him?

Maria O, he has done nothing—but 'tis for what he has said: His conversation is a perpetual libel on all his acquaintance.

Joseph Surface Aye, and the worst of it is, there is no advantage in not knowing him—for he'll abuse a stranger just as soon as his best friend; and his uncle is as bad.

Lady Sneerwell Nay, but we should make allowance—Sir Benjamin is a wit and a poet.

Maria For my part, I confess, madam, wit loses its respect with me, when I see it in company with malice.—What do you think, Mr. Surface?

Joseph Surface Certainly, madam; to smile at the jest which plants a thorn in another's breast is to become a principal in the mischief.

Lady Sneerwell Pshaw!—there's no possibility of being witty without a little ill nature: the malice of a good thing is the barb that makes it stick.—What's your opinion, Mr. Surface?

Joseph Surface To be sure, madam; that conversation, where the spirit of raillery is suppressed, will ever appear tedious and insipid.

ACT I Maria Well, I'll not debate how far scandal may be allowable; but in
SCENE I a man, I am sure, it is always contemptible. We have pride, envy,
 rivalry, and a thousand little motives to depreciate each other; but
 the male slanderer must have the cowardice of a woman before he can
 traduce one.

Enter Servant.

Servant Madam, Mrs. Candour is below, and if your ladyship's at
 leisure, will leave her carriage.

Lady Sneerwell Beg her to walk in.—[*Exit Servant.*]—Now, Maria,
 here is a character to your taste; for though Mrs. Candour is a little
 talkative, everybody allows her to be the best natured and best sort of
 woman.

Maria Yet with a very gross affectation of good nature and benevolence,
 she does more mischief than the direct malice of old Crabtree.

Joseph Surface I'faith 'tis true, Lady Sneerwell: whenever I hear the
 current running against the characters of my friends, I never think
 them in such danger as when Candour undertakes their defence.

Lady Sneerwell Hush!—here she is!—

Enter Mrs. Candour.

Mrs. Candour My dear Lady Sneerwell, how have you been this
 century?—Mr. Surface, what news do you hear?—though indeed it
 is no matter, for I think one hears nothing else but scandal.

Joseph Surface Just so, indeed, madam.

Mrs. Candour Ah! Maria, child,—what, is the whole affair off between
 you and Charles?—His extravagance, I presume—the town talks of
 nothing else.

Maria I am very sorry, ma'am, the town has so little to do.

Mrs. Candour True, true, child: but there's no stopping people's
 tongues. I own I was hurt to hear it, as I indeed was to learn, from the
 same quarter, that your guardian, Sir Peter, and Lady Teazle have
 not agreed lately as well as could be wished.

Maria 'Tis strangely impertinent for people to busy themselves so.

Mrs. Candour Very true, child:—but what's to be done? People will



talk—there's no preventing it. Why, it was but yesterday I was told that Miss Gadabout had eloped with Sir Filigree Flirt.—But, Lord! there is no minding what one hears; though, to be sure, I had this from very good authority.

Maria Such reports are highly scandalous.

Mrs. Candour So they are, child—shameful! shameful! But the world is so censorious, no character escapes.—Lord now! who would have suspected your friend, Miss Prim, of an indiscretion? Yet such is the ill-nature of people, that they say her uncle stopped her last week, just as she was stepping into the York diligence with her dancing-master.

Maria I'll answer for't there are no grounds for the report.

Mrs. Candour O, no foundation in the world, I dare swear; no more, probably, than for the story circulated last month, of Mrs. Festino's affair with Colonel Cassino;—though, to be sure, that matter was never rightly cleared up.

Joseph Surface The licence of invention some people take is monstrous indeed.

Maria 'Tis so—but, in my opinion, those who report such things are equally culpable.

Mrs. Candour To be sure they are; tale-bearers are as bad as the tale-makers—'tis an old observation, and a very true one: but what's to be done, as I said before? How will you prevent people from talking? Today, Mrs. Clackit assured me, Mr. and Mrs. Honeymoon were at last become mere man and wife, like the rest of their acquaintance. She likewise hinted that a certain widow, in the next street, had got rid of her dropsy and recovered her shape in a most surprising manner. And at the same time, Miss Tattle, who was by, affirmed, that Lord Buffalo had discovered his lady at a house of no



SERVANT

ACT I
SCENE I

extraordinary fame; and that Sir Harry Boquet and Tom Saunter were to measure swords on a similar provocation.—But, Lord, do you think I would report these things?—No, no! tale-bearers, as I said before, are just as bad as the tale-makers.

Joseph Surface Ah! Mrs. Candour, if everybody had your forbearance and good-nature!——

Mrs. Candour I confess, Mr. Surface, I cannot bear to hear people attacked behind their backs; and when ugly circumstances come out against our acquaintance, I own I always love to think the best.—By-the-bye, I hope 'tis not true that your brother is absolutely ruined.

Joseph Surface I am afraid his circumstances are very bad indeed, madam.

Mrs. Candour Ah! I heard so—but you must tell him to keep up his spirits; everybody almost is in the same way—Lord Spindle, Sir Thomas Splint, Captain Quinze, and Mr. Nickit—all up, I hear, within this week; so if Charles is undone, he'll find half his acquaintance ruined too, and that, you know, is a consolation.

Joseph Surface Doubtless, ma'am—a very great one.

Enter Servant.

Servant Mr. Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite. [*Exit Servant.*]

Lady Sneerwell So, Maria, you see your lover pursues you; positively you shan't escape.

Enter Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite.

Crabtree Lady Sneerwell, I kiss your hand—Mrs. Candour, I don't believe you are acquainted with my nephew, Sir Benjamin Backbite? Egad! ma'am, he has a pretty wit, and is a pretty poet too; isn't he, Lady Sneerwell?

Sir Benjamin Oh, fie, uncle!

Crabtree Nay, egad, it's true; I back him at a rebus or a charade against the best rhymers in the kingdom.—Has your ladyship heard the epigram he wrote last week on Lady Frizzle's feather catching fire?—Do, Benjamin, repeat it, or the charade you made last night extempore at Mrs. Drowzie's conversazione. Come now;—your

first is the name of a fish, your second a great naval commander, and——

ACT I
SCENE I

Sir Benjamin Uncle, now—prithee——

Crabtree I'faith, ma'am, 'twould surprise you to hear how ready he is at all these things.

Lady Sneerwell I wonder, Sir Benjamin, you never publish anything.

Sir Benjamin To say truth, ma'am, 'tis very vulgar to print; and as my little productions are mostly satires and lampoons on particular people, I find they circulate more by giving copies in confidence to the friends of the parties. However, I have some love elegies, which, when favoured with this lady's smiles, I mean to give the public.

Crabtree 'Fore heaven, ma'am, they'll immortalize you!—you will be handed down to posterity, like Petrarch's Laura, or Waller's Sacharissa.

Sir Benjamin Yes, madam, I think you will like them, when you shall see them on a beautiful quarto page, where a neat rivulet of text shall murmur through a meadow of margin. 'Foregad, they will be the most elegant things of their kind!

Crabtree But, ladies, that's true—have you heard the news?

Mrs. Candour What, sir, do you mean the report of——

Crabtree No, ma'am, that's not it—Miss Nicely is going to be married to her own footman.

Mrs. Candour Impossible!

Crabtree Ask Sir Benjamin.

Sir Benjamin 'Tis true very, ma'am; everything is fixed, and the wedding liveries bespoken.

Crabtree Yes—and they do say there were pressing reasons for it.

Lady Sneerwell Why, I have heard something of this before.

Mrs. Candour It can't be—and I wonder any one should believe such a story, of so prudent a lady as Miss Nicely.

Sir Benjamin O Lud! ma'am, that's the very reason 'twas believed at once. She has always been so cautious and so reserved, that everybody was sure there was some reason for it at bottom.

Mrs. Candour Why, to be sure, a tale of scandal is as fatal to the credit of a prudent lady of her stamp, as a fever is generally to those of the

ACT I strongest constitutions. But there is a sort of puny sickly reputation,
SCENE I that is always ailing, yet will outlive the robuster characters of a
 hundred prudes.

Sir Benjamin True, madam,—there are valetudinarians in reputation as well as constitution; who, being conscious of their weak part, avoid the least breath of air, and supply their want of stamina by care and circumspection.

Mrs. Candour Well, but this may be all a mistake. You know, Sir Benjamin, very trifling circumstances often give rise to the most injurious tales.

Crabtree That they do, I'll be sworn, ma'am.—Did you ever hear how Miss Piper came to lose her lover and her character last summer at Tunbridge?—Sir Benjamin, you remember it?

Sir Benjamin Oh, to be sure!—the most whimsical circumstance.

Lady Sneerwell How was it, pray?

Crabtree Why, one evening, at Mrs. Ponto's assembly, the conversation happened to turn on the difficulty of breeding Nova Scotia sheep in this country. Says a young lady in company, I have known instances of it—for Miss Letitia Piper, a first cousin of mine, had a Nova Scotia sheep that produced her twins.—What! cries the Lady Dowager Dundizzy (who you know is as deaf as a post), has Miss Piper had twins?—This mistake, as you may imagine, threw the whole company into a fit of laughing. However, 'twas the next day everywhere reported, and in a few days believed by the whole town, that Miss Letitia Piper had actually been brought to bed of a fine boy and a girl; and in less than a week there were some people who could name the father, and the farm-house where the babies were put out to nurse.

Lady Sneerwell Strange, indeed!

Crabtree Matter of fact, I assure you.—O Lud! Mr. Surface, pray is it true that your uncle, Sir Oliver, is coming home?

Joseph Surface Not that I know of, indeed, sir.

Crabtree He has been in the East Indies a long time. You can scarcely remember him, I believe—Sad comfort whenever he returns, to hear how your brother has gone on!

Joseph Surface Charles has been imprudent, sir, to be sure; but I

hope no busy people have already prejudiced Sir Oliver against him—he may reform.

ACT I
SCENE 1

Sir Benjamin To be sure he may: for my part, I never believed him to be so utterly void of principle as people say; and though he has lost all his friends, I am told nobody is better spoken of by the Jews.

Crabtree That's true, egad, nephew. If the Old Jewry was a ward, I believe Charles would be an alderman:—no man more popular there, 'foregad! I hear he pays as many annuities as the Irish tontine; and that whenever he is sick they have prayers for the recovery of his health in all the synagogues.

Sir Benjamin Yet no man lives in greater splendour. They tell me, when he entertains his friends he will sit down to dinner with a dozen of his own securities; have a score of tradesmen waiting in the ante-chamber, and an officer behind every guest's chair.

Joseph Surface This may be entertainment to you, gentlemen, but you pay very little regard to the feelings of a brother.

Maria Their malice is intolerable.—Lady Sneerwell, I must wish you a good morning: I'm not very well. [*Exit Maria.*]

Mrs. Candour O dear! she changes colour very much.

Lady Sneerwell Do, Mrs. Candour, follow her: she may want assistance.

Mrs. Candour That I will, with all my soul, ma'am.—Poor dear creature, who knows what her situation may be! [*Exit.*]

Lady Sneerwell 'Twas nothing but that she could not bear to hear Charles reflected on, notwithstanding their difference.

Sir Benjamin The young lady's *penchant* is obvious.

Crabtree But, Benjamin, you must not give up the pursuit for that:—follow her, and put her into good humour. Repeat her some of your own verses. Come, I'll assist you.

Sir Benjamin Mr. Surface, I did not mean to hurt you; but depend on't your brother is utterly undone.

Crabtree O Lud, ay! undone as ever man was. Can't raise a guinea!

Sir Benjamin Everything sold, I am told, that was movable.

Crabtree I have seen one that was at his house. Not a thing left but

ACT I some empty bottles that were overlooked, and the family pictures,
SCENE I which I believe are framed in the wainscot——

Sir Benjamin [*Going.*] And I'm very sorry, also, to hear some bad stories against him.

Crabtree O! he has done many mean things, that's certain.

Sir Benjamin [*Going.*] But, however, as he's your brother——

Crabtree We'll tell you all another opportunity. [*Exeunt.*]

Lady Sneerwell Ha! ha! 'tis very hard for them to leave a subject they have not quite run down.

Joseph Surface And I believe the abuse was not more acceptable to your ladyship than to Maria.

Lady Sneerwell I doubt her affections are farther engaged than we imagine. But the family are to be here this evening, so you may as well dine where you are, and we shall have an opportunity of observing further; in the meantime, I'll go and plot mischief, and you shall study sentiment. [*Exeunt.*]

Scene 2

Sir Peter Teazle's house

Enter Sir Peter.

Sir Peter When an old bachelor marries a young wife, what is he to expect? 'Tis now six months since Lady Teazle made me the happiest of men—and I have been the most miserable dog ever since that ever committed wedlock! We tift a little going to church, and came to a quarrel before the bells had done ringing. I was more than once nearly choked with gall during the honeymoon, and had lost all comfort in life before my friends had done wishing me joy. Yet I chose with caution—a girl bred wholly in the country, who never knew luxury beyond one silk gown, nor dissipation beyond the annual gala of a race ball. Yet now she plays her part in all the extravagant fopperies of the fashion and the town, with as ready a grace as if she had never seen a bush or a grass-plot out of Grosvenor Square! I am sneered at by all my acquaintance, and paragraphed in the newspapers. She dissipates my fortune, and contradicts all my humours; yet, the worst of it is, I doubt I love her, or I should never bear all this. However, I'll never be weak enough to own it.

Enter Rowley.

Rowley O Sir Peter, your servant: how is it with you, sir?

Sir Peter Very bad, Master Rowley, very bad. I meet with nothing but crosses and vexations.

Rowley What can have happened to trouble you since yesterday?

Sir Peter A good question to a married man!

Rowley Nay, I'm sure, Sir Peter, your lady can't be the cause of your uneasiness.

Sir Peter Why, has any one told you she was dead?

Rowley Come, come, Sir Peter, you love her, notwithstanding your tempers don't exactly agree.

Sir Peter But the fault is entirely hers, Master Rowley. I am, myself,

ACT I the sweetest-tempered man alive, and hate a teasing temper; and so
SCENE 2 I tell her a hundred times a day.

Rowley Indeed!

Sir Peter Aye; and what is very extraordinary, in all our disputes she is always in the wrong! But Lady Sneerwell, and the set she meets at her house, encourage the perverseness of her disposition.—Then, to complete my vexation, Maria, my ward, whom I ought to have the power of a father over, is determined to turn rebel too, and absolutely refuses the man whom I have long resolved on for her husband; meaning, I suppose, to bestow herself on his profligate brother.

Rowley You know, Sir Peter, I have always taken the liberty to differ with you on the subject of these two young gentlemen. I only wish you may not be deceived in your opinion of the elder. For Charles, my life on't! he will retrieve his errors yet. Their worthy father, once my honoured master, was at his years, nearly as wild a spark; yet, when he died, he did not leave a more benevolent heart to lament his loss.

Sir Peter You are wrong, Master Rowley. On their father's death, you know, I acted as a kind of guardian to them both till their uncle Sir Oliver's eastern liberality gave them an early independence. Of course, no person could have more opportunities of judging of their hearts, and I was never mistaken in my life. Joseph is indeed a model for



SIR PETER TEAZLE ACT I



Peter
Sir Peter
Tennant

the young men of the age. He is a man of sentiment, and acts up to the sentiments he professes, but for the other, take my word for't, if he had any grain of virtue by descent, he has dissipated it with the rest of his inheritance. Ah! my old friend, Sir Oliver, will be deeply mortified when he finds how part of his bounty has been misapplied.

Rowley I am sorry to find you so violent against the young man, because this may be the most critical period of his fortune. I came hither with news that will surprise you.

Sir Peter What! let me hear.

Rowley Sir Oliver *is* arrived, and at this moment in town.

Sir Peter How! you astonish me! I thought you did not expect him this month.

Rowley I did not; but his passage has been remarkably quick.

Sir Peter Egad, I shall rejoice to see my old friend. 'Tis sixteen years since we met.—We have had many a day together:—but does he still enjoin us not to inform his nephews of his arrival?

Rowley Most strictly. He means, before it is known, to make some trial of their dispositions.

Sir Peter Ah! there needs no art to discover their merits—he shall have his way: but, pray, does he know I am married?

Rowley Yes, and will soon wish you joy.

Sir Peter What, as we drink health to a friend in a consumption? Ah! Oliver will laugh at me. We used to rail at matrimony together, and he has been steady to his text.—Well, he must lie at my house, though!—I'll instantly give orders for his reception.—But, Master Rowley, don't drop a word that Lady Teazle and I ever disagree.

Rowley By no means.

Sir Peter For I never should be able to stand Noll's jokes; so I'd have him think, Lord forgive me! that we are a very happy couple.

Rowley I understand you:—but then you must be very careful not to differ while he is in the house with you.

Sir Peter Egad, and so we must—and that's impossible. Ah! Master Rowley, when an old bachelor marries a young wife, he deserves—no—the crime carries the punishment along with it. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT THE SECOND

Scene I

Sir Peter Teazle's house

Enter Sir Peter and Lady Teazle.

Sir Peter Lady Teazle, Lady Teazle, I'll not bear it!

Lady Teazle Sir Peter, Sir Peter, you may bear it or not, as you please; but I ought to have my own way in everything, and what's more, I will, too. What! though I was educated in the country, I know very well that women of fashion in London are accountable to nobody after they are married.

Sir Peter Very well, ma'am, very well;—so a husband is to have no influence, no authority?

Lady Teazle Authority! No, to be sure:—if you wanted authority over me, you should have adopted me, and not married me: I am sure you were old enough.

Sir Peter Old enough!—aye—there it is. Well, well, Lady Teazle, though my life may be made unhappy by your temper, I'll not be ruined by your extravagance.

Lady Teazle My extravagance? I'm sure I'm not more extravagant than a woman of fashion ought to be.

Sir Peter No, no, madam, you shall throw away no more sums on such unmeaning luxury. 'Slife! to spend as much to furnish your dressing-room with flowers in winter as would suffice to turn the Pantheon into a greenhouse, and give a *fête champêtre* at Christmas.

Lady Teazle Lord, Sir Peter, am I to blame because flowers are dear in cold weather? You should find fault with the climate, and not with me. For my part, I'm sure, I wish it was spring all the year round, and that roses grew under one's feet!

Sir Peter Oons! madam—if you had been born to this, I shouldn't

wonder at your talking thus; but you forget what your situation was when I married you.

Lady Teazle No, no, I don't; 'twas a very disagreeable one, or I never should have married you.

Sir Peter Yes, yes, madam, you were then in somewhat an humbler style:—the daughter of a plain country squire. Recollect, Lady Teazle, when I saw you first, sitting at your tambour, in a pretty figured linen gown, with a bunch of keys by your side; your hair combed smooth over a roll, and your apartment hung round with fruits in worsted, of your own working.

Lady Teazle Oh, yes! I remember it very well, and a curious life I led! my daily occupation to inspect the dairy, superintend the poultry, make extracts from the family receipt-book; and comb my aunt Deborah's lap-dog.

Sir Peter Yes, yes, madam, 'twas so indeed.

Lady Teazle And then, you know, my evening amusements! To draw patterns for ruffles, which I had not materials to make up; to play Pope Joan with the curate; to read a sermon to my aunt; or to be stuck down to an old spinet to strum my father to sleep after a fox-chase.

Sir Peter I am glad you have so good a memory. Yes, madam, these were the recreations I took you from; but now you must have your coach,—*vis-à-vis*,—and three powdered footmen before your chair; and, in the summer, a pair of white cats to draw you to Kensington



LADY TEAZLE Act II

ACT II
SCENE I

Gardens. No recollection, I suppose, when you were content to ride double, behind the butler, or a docked coach-horse?

Lady Teazle No—I swear I never did that; I deny the butler and the coach-horse.

Sir Peter This, madam, was your situation; and what have I done for you? I have made you a woman of fashion, of fortune, of rank; in short, I have made you *my wife*.

Lady Teazle Well, then,—and there is but one thing more you can make me to add to the obligation, and that is——

Sir Peter My widow, I suppose?

Lady Teazle Hem! hem!

Sir Peter I thank you, madam—but don't flatter yourself; for though your ill conduct may disturb my peace, it shall never break my heart, I promise you: however, I am equally obliged to you for the hint.

Lady Teazle Then why will you endeavour to make yourself so disagreeable to me, and thwart me in every little elegant expense?

Sir Peter 'Slife, madam, I say, had you any of these little elegant expenses when you married me?

Lady Teazle Lud, Sir Peter! would you have me be out of the fashion?

Sir Peter The fashion, indeed! what had you to do with the fashion when you married me?

Lady Teazle For my part, I should think you would like to have your wife thought a woman of taste.

Sir Peter Aye—there again—taste—Zounds! madam, you had no taste when you married me!

Lady Teazle That's very true indeed, Sir Peter; and after having married you, I am sure I should never pretend to taste again. But now, Sir Peter, if we have finished our daily jangle, I presume I may go to my engagement at Lady Sneerwell's.

Sir Peter Aye, there's another precious circumstance—a charming set of acquaintance you have made there.

Lady Teazle Nay, Sir Peter, they are all people of rank and fortune, and remarkably tenacious of reputation.

Sir Peter Yes, egad, they are tenacious of reputation with a vengeance; for they don't choose anybody should have a character but themselves!

—such a crew! Ah! many a wretch has rid on a hurdle who has done less mischief than these utterers of forged tales, coiners of scandal, and clippers of reputation. ACT II
SCENE I

Lady Teazle What! would you restrain the freedom of speech?

Sir Peter Oh! they have made you just as bad as any one of the society.

Lady Teazle Why, I believe I do bear a part with a tolerable grace.

But I vow I bear no malice against the people I abuse. When I say an ill-natured thing, 'tis out of pure good humour; and I take it for granted, they deal exactly in the same manner with me. But, Sir Peter, you know you promised to come to Lady Sneerwell's too.

Sir Peter Well, well, I'll call in just to look after my own character.

Lady Teazle Then indeed you must make haste after me, or you'll be too late. So, good-bye to you. [*Exit Lady Teazle.*]

Sir Peter Soh!—I have gained much by my intended expostulation: yet, with what a charming air she contradicts everything I say, and how pleasingly she shows her contempt for my authority! Well, though I can't make her love me, there is great satisfaction in quarrelling with her; and I think she never appears to such advantage as when she is doing everything in her power to plague me. [*Exit.*]

Scene 2

Lady Sneerwell's house

Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour, Crabtree, Sir Benjamin Backbite, and Joseph Surface discovered, Servants attending with tea.

Lady Sneerwell Nay, positively, we will hear it.

Joseph Surface Yes, yes, the epigram, by all means.

Sir Benjamin Oh, plague on't, uncle! 'tis mere nonsense.

Crabtree No, no; 'foregad, very clever for an extempore!

Sir Benjamin But, ladies, you should be acquainted with the circumstance. You must know, that one day last week, as Lady Betty Curricie was taking the dust in Hyde Park, in a sort of a duodecimo phaeton, she desired me to write some verses on her ponies; upon which I took out my pocket-book, and in one moment produced the following:

*Sure never were seen two such beautiful ponies;
Other horses are clowns, but these macaronies;
To give 'em this title I'm sure isn't wrong,
Their legs are so slim, and their tails are so long.*

Crabtree There, ladies, done in the smack of a whip, and on horse-back too.

Joseph Surface A very Phoebus, mounted—indeed, Sir Benjamin.

Sir Benjamin O dear sir,—trifles—trifles.

Enter Lady Teazle and Maria.

Mrs. Candour I must have a copy.

Lady Sneerwell Lady Teazle, I hope we shall see Sir Peter?

Lady Teazle I believe he'll wait on your ladyship presently.

Lady Sneerwell Maria, my love, you look grave. Come, you shall sit down to cards with Mr. Surface.

Maria I take very little pleasure in cards—however, I'll do as your ladyship pleases.

Lady Teazle [*Aside.*] I am surprised Mr. Surface should sit down with

ACT II
SCENE 2

her; I thought he would have embraced this opportunity of speaking to me, before Sir Peter came.

Mrs. Candour Now, I'll die, but you are so scandalous, I'll forswear your society.

Lady Teazle What's the matter, Mrs. Candour?

Mrs. Candour They'll not allow our friend Miss Vermillion to be handsome.

Lady Sneerwell O, surely she's a pretty woman.

Crabtree I am very glad you think so, madam.

Mrs. Candour She has a charming fresh colour.

Lady Teazle Yes, when it is fresh put on.

Mrs. Candour O, fie! I'll swear her colour is natural: I have seen it come and go.

Lady Teazle I dare swear you have, ma'am; it goes off at night, and comes again in the morning.

Sir Benjamin True, ma'am, it not only comes and goes, but, what's more—egad, her maid can fetch and carry it!

Mrs. Candour Ha! ha! ha! how I hate to hear you talk so! But surely now, her sister *is*, or *was*, very handsome.

Crabtree Who? Mrs. Evergreen? O Lord! she's six and fifty if she's an hour!

Mrs. Candour Now positively you wrong her; fifty-two or fifty-three is the utmost—and I don't think she looks more.

Sir Benjamin Ah! there's no judging by her looks, unless one could see her face.

Lady Sneerwell Well, well, if Mrs. Evergreen *does* take some pains to repair the ravages of time, you must allow she effects it with great ingenuity; and surely that's better than the careless manner in which the widow Ochre caulks her wrinkles.

Sir Benjamin Nay now, Lady Sneerwell,



MARIA Act II

ACT II
SCENE 2

you are severe upon the widow. Come, come, 'tis not that she paints so ill—but when she has finished her face, she joins it so badly to her neck, that she looks like a mended statue, in which the connoisseur sees at once that the head's modern, though the trunk's antique.

Crabtree Ha! ha! ha! Well said, nephew!

Mrs. Candour Ha! ha! ha! Well, you make me laugh; but I vow I hate you for it. What do you think of Miss Simper?

Sir Benjamin Why, she has very pretty teeth.

Lady Teazle Yes, and on that account, when she is neither speaking nor laughing (which very seldom happens), she never absolutely shuts her mouth, but leaves it always on a jar, as it were, thus— [*Shows her teeth.*]

Mrs. Candour How can you be so ill-natured?

Lady Teazle Nay, I'll allow even that's better than the pains Mrs. Prim takes to conceal her losses in front. She draws her mouth till it positively resembles the aperture of a poor's box, and all her words appear to slide out edgewise. As it were thus *How do you do, madam. Yes madam.*

Lady Sneerwell Very well, Lady Teazle; I see you can be a little severe.

Lady Teazle In defence of a friend it is but justice.—But here comes Sir Peter to spoil our pleasantry.

Enter Sir Peter Teazle.

Sir Peter Ladies, your most obedient. [*Aside.*] Mercy on me! here is the whole set! a character dead at every word, I suppose.

Mrs. Candour I am rejoiced you are come, Sir Peter. They have been so censorious—they will allow good qualities to nobody; not even good nature to our friend Mrs. Pursy.

Lady Teazle What, the fat dowager who was at Mrs. Codrille's last night?

Mrs. Candour Nay, her bulk is her misfortune; and when she takes such pains to get rid of it, you ought not to reflect on her.

Lady Sneerwell That's very true, indeed.



Lady Teazle Yes, I know she almost lives on acids and small whey; laces herself by pulleys; and often in the hottest noon in summer, you may see her on a little squat pony, with her hair plaited up behind like a drummer's, and puffing round the Ring on a full trot.

Mrs. Candour I thank you, Lady Teazle, for defending her.

Sir Peter Yes, a good defence, truly!

Mrs. Candour But Sir Benjamin is as censorious as Miss Sallow.

Crabtree Yes, and she is a curious being to pretend to be censorious—an awkward gawky, without any one good point under heaven.

Mrs. Candour Positively you shall not be so very severe. Miss Sallow is a relation of mine by marriage, and as for her person, great allowance is to be made; for, let me tell you, a woman labours under many disadvantages who tries to pass for a girl at six and thirty.

Lady Sneerwell Though, surely, she is handsome still—and for the weakness in her eyes, considering how much she reads by candle-light, it is not to be wondered at.

Mrs. Candour True, and then as to her manner; upon my word I think it is particularly graceful, considering she never had the least education; for you know her mother was a Welsh milliner, and her father a sugar-baker at Bristol.

Sir Benjamin Ah! you are both of you too good-natured!

Sir Peter [*Aside.*] Yes, damned good-natured! This their own relation! mercy on me!

Mrs. Candour For my part, I own I cannot bear to hear a friend ill spoken of.

Sir Peter No, to be sure!

Sir Benjamin And Mrs. Candour is of so moral a turn, she can sit for an hour and hear Lady Stucco talk sentiments.

Lady Teazle Nay, I vow Lady Stucco is very well with the dessert after dinner; for she's just like the French fruit one cracks for mottoes—made up of paint and proverb.

Mrs. Candour Well, I never will join in ridiculing a friend; and so I constantly tell my cousin Ogle, and you all know what pretensions she has to be critical on beauty.

Crabtree Oh, to be sure! she has herself the oddest countenance

ACT II
SCENE 2

that ever was seen; 'tis a collection of features from all the different countries of the globe.

Sir Benjamin So she has, indeed—an Irish front——

Crabtree Caledonian locks——

Sir Benjamin Dutch nose——

Crabtree Austrian lips——

Sir Benjamin Complexion of a Spaniard——

Crabtree And teeth *à la Chinois*——

Sir Benjamin In short, her face resembles a *table d'hôte* at Spa—where no two guests are of a nation——

Crabtree Or a congress at the close of a general war—wherein all the members, even to her eyes, appear to have a different interest, and her nose and chin are the only parties likely to join issue.

Mrs. Candour Ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter [*Aside.*] Mercy on my life!—a person they dine with twice a week.

Lady Sneerwell Go, go; you are a couple of provoking toads.

Mrs. Candour Nay, but I vow you shall not carry the laugh off so—for give me leave to say, that Mrs. Ogle——

Sir Peter Madam, madam, I beg your pardon—there's no stopping these good gentlemen's tongues.—But when I tell you, Mrs. Candour, that the lady they are abusing is a particular friend of mine, I hope you'll not take her part.

Lady Sneerwell Well said, Sir Peter! but you are a cruel creature—too phlegmatic yourself for a jest, and too peevish to allow wit in others.



SIR PETER ACT II

Sir Peter Ah! madam, true wit is more nearly allied to good-nature than your ladyship is aware of.

Lady Teazle True, Sir Peter: I believe they are so near akin that they can never be united.

Sir Benjamin Or rather, madam, suppose them to be man and wife, because one seldom sees them together.

Lady Teazle But Sir Peter is such an enemy to scandal I believe he would have it put down by Parliament.

Sir Peter 'Fore heaven, madam, if they were to consider the sporting with reputation of as much importance as the poaching on manors, and pass an Act for the Preservation of Fame, I believe there are many would thank for them the bill.

Lady Sneerwell O Lud! Sir Peter; would you deprive us of our privileges?

Sir Peter Aye, madam; and then no person should be permitted to kill characters and run down reputations, but qualified old maids and disappointed widows.

Lady Sneerwell Go, you monster.

Mrs. Candour But, surely, you would not be quite so severe on those who only report what they hear?

Sir Peter Yes, madam, I would have law-merchant for them too; and in all cases of slander currency, whenever the drawer of the lie was not to be found, the injured party should have a right to come on any of the indorsers.

Crabtree Well, for my part, I believe there never was a scandalous tale without some foundation.

Lady Sneerwell Come, ladies, shall we sit down to cards in the next room?

Enter a Servant, who whispers Sir Peter.

Sir Peter [*Apart.*] I'll be with them directly.—I'll get away unperceived.

Lady Sneerwell Sir Peter, you are not leaving us?

Sir Peter Your ladyship must excuse me; I'm called away by particular business. But I leave my character behind me. [*Exit Sir Peter.*]

Sir Benjamin Well—certainly, Lady Teazle, that lord of yours is a

ACT II strange being: I could tell you some stories of him would make you
SCENE 2 laugh heartily,—if he were not your husband.
Lady Teazle Oh, pray don't mind that;—come, do let's hear them.

Lady Teazle joins the rest of the company going into the next room.

Joseph Surface Maria, I see you have no satisfaction in this society.

Maria How is it possible I should? If to raise malicious smiles at the infirmities or misfortunes of those who have never injured us be the province of wit or humour, Heaven grant me a double portion of dullness!

Joseph Surface Yet they appear more ill-natured than they are—they have no malice at heart.

Maria Then is their conduct still more contemptible; for, in my opinion, nothing could excuse the intemperance of their tongues, but a natural and ungovernable bitterness of mind.

Joseph Surface But can you, Maria, feel thus for others, and be unkind to me alone? Is hope to be denied the tenderest passion?

Maria Why will you distress me by renewing the subject?

Joseph Surface Ah! Maria! you would not treat me thus, and oppose your guardian, Sir Peter's will, but that I see that profligate Charles is still a favoured rival.

Maria Ungenerously urged!—But whatever my sentiments are for that unfortunate young man, be assured I shall not feel more bound to give him up, because his distresses have lost him the regard even of a brother.

Enter Lady Teazle and comes forward.

Joseph Surface Nay, but Maria, do not leave me with a frown: by all that's honest, I swear—— Gad's life, here's Lady Teazle!—

[*Aside.*]—You must not—no, you shall not—for, though I have the greatest regard for Lady Teazle——

Maria Lady Teazle!

Joseph Surface Yet were Sir Peter once to suspect——

Lady Teazle What is this, pray? Do you take her for me?—Child, you are wanted in the next room.—[*Exit Maria.*]—What is all this, pray?

Joseph Surface O the most unlucky circumstance in nature! Maria has somehow suspected the tender concern I have for your happiness, and threatened to acquaint Sir Peter with her suspicions, and I was just endeavouring to reason with her when you came in.

Lady Teazle Indeed! but you seemed to adopt a very tender mode of reasoning—do you usually argue on your knees?

Joseph Surface Oh, she's a child, and I thought a little bombast—
But, Lady Teazle, when are you to give me your judgment on my library, as you promised?

Lady Teazle No, no; I begin to think it would be imprudent, and you know I admit you as a lover no further than fashion requires.

Joseph Surface True—a mere platonic cicisbeo—what every London wife is entitled to.

Lady Teazle Certainly, one must not be out of the fashion. However, I have so much of my country prejudices left, that, though Sir Peter's ill-humour may vex me ever so, it never shall provoke me to—

Joseph Surface The only revenge in your power. Well—I applaud your moderation.

Lady Teazle Go—you are an insinuating wretch.—But we shall be missed—let us join the company.

Joseph Surface But we had best not return together.

Lady Teazle Well—don't stay; for Maria shan't come to hear any more of your reasoning, I promise you. [*Exit Lady Teazle.*]

Joseph Surface A curious dilemma, truly, my politics have run me into! I wanted, at first, only to ingratiate myself with Lady Teazle, that she might not be my enemy with Maria; and I have, I don't know how, become her serious lover. Sincerely I begin to wish I had never made such a point of gaining so very good a character, for it has led me into so many cursed rogueries that I doubt I shall be exposed at last. [*Exit.*]

ACT II
SCENE 3

Scene 3
Sir Peter Teazle's

Enter Rowley and Sir Oliver Surface.

Sir Oliver Ha! ha! ha! So my old friend is married, hey?—a young wife out of the country.—Ha! ha! ha! that he should have stood bluff to old bachelor so long, and sink into husband at last.

Rowley But you must not rally him on the subject, Sir Oliver: 'tis a tender point, I assure you, though he has been married only seven months.

Sir Oliver Then he has been just half a year on the stool of repentance!—Poor Peter!—But you say he has entirely given up Charles,—never sees him, hey?

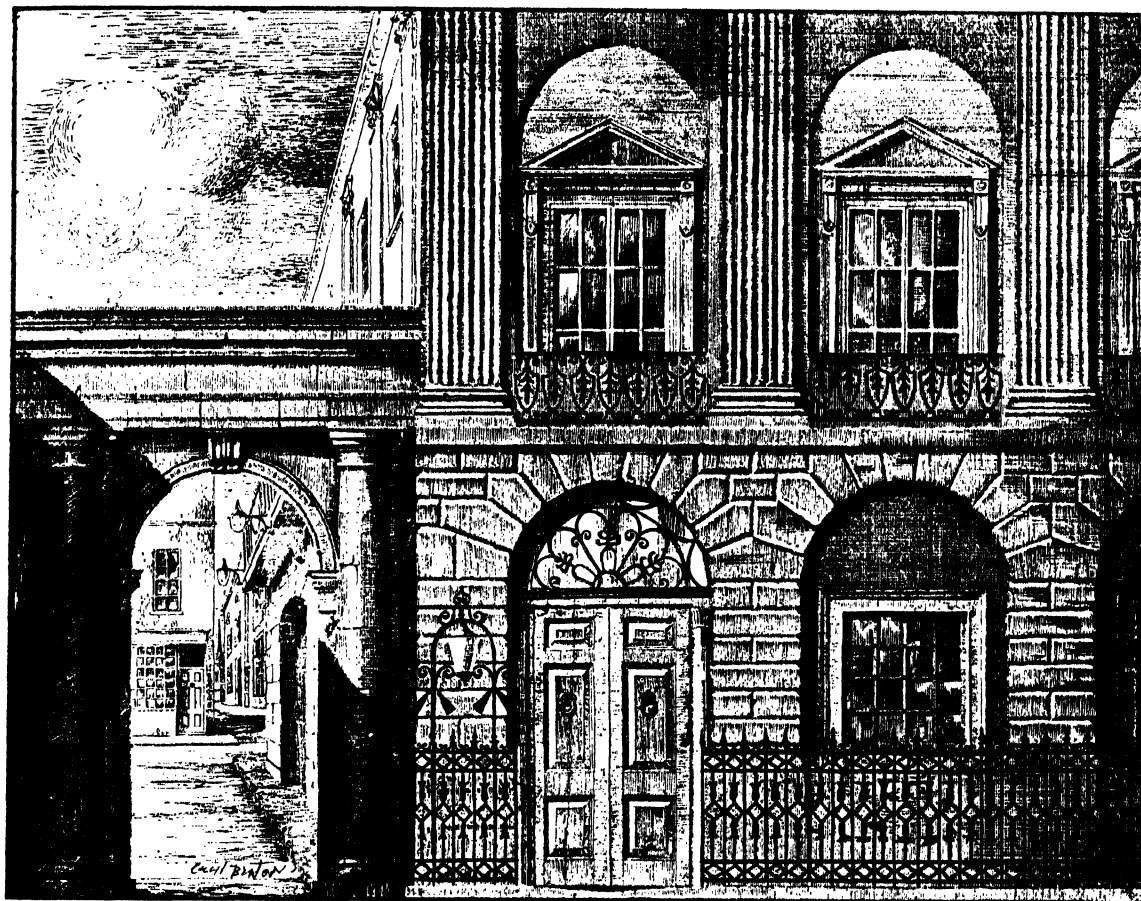
Rowley His prejudice against him is astonishing, and I am sure, greatly increased by a jealousy of him with Lady Teazle, which he has been industriously led into by a scandalous society in the neighbourhood, who have contributed not a little to Charles's ill name. Whereas the truth is, I believe, if the lady is partial to either of them, his brother is the favourite.

Sir Oliver Aye, I know there are a set of malicious, prating, prudent gossips, both male and female, who murder characters to kill time; and will rob a young fellow of his good name, before he has years to know the value of it.—But I am not to be prejudiced against my nephew by such, I promise you.—No, no,—if Charles has done nothing false or mean, I shall compound for his extravagance.

Rowley Then, my life on't, you will reclaim him.—Ah, sir! it gives me new life to find that *your* heart is not turned against him: and that the son of my good old master has one friend, however, left.

Sir Oliver What, shall I forget, Master Rowley, when I was at his years myself? Egad, my brother and I were neither of us very prudent youths; and yet, I believe, you have not seen many better men than your old master was.

Rowley Sir, 'tis this reflection gives me assurance that Charles may yet be a credit to his family.—But here comes Sir Peter.



SIR PETER TEAZLE'S HOUSE EXTERIOR

Sir Oliver Egad, so he does.—Mercy on me!—he's greatly altered—
and seems to have a settled married look! One may read *husband* in
his face at this distance.

ACT II
SCENE 3

Enter Sir Peter.

Sir Peter Hah! Sir Oliver—my old friend! Welcome to England a
thousand times!

Sir Oliver Thank you—thank you, Sir Peter! and i'faith I am glad
to find you well, believe me.

Sir Peter Oh! 'tis a long time since we met—sixteen years, I doubt,
Sir Oliver, and many a cross accident in the time.

Sir Oliver Aye, I have had my share.—But, what! I find you are
married, hey my old boy! Well, well—it can't be helped—and so—
I wish you joy with all my heart.

Sir Peter Thank you, thank you, Sir Oliver.—Yes, I have entered into—
the happy state;—but we'll not talk of that now.

Sir Oliver True, true, Sir Peter: old friends should not begin on
grievances at first meeting—no, no, no.

Rowley [*To Sir Oliver.*] Take care, pray, sir.

Sir Oliver Well—so one of my nephews is a wild young rogue, hey?

Sir Peter Wild!—Ah! my old friend, I grieve for your disappointment
there; he's a lost young man, indeed. However, his brother will
make you amends; Joseph is, indeed, what a youth should be.
Everybody in the world speaks well of him.

Sir Oliver I am sorry to hear it; he has too good a character to be an
honest fellow. Everybody speaks well of him!—Pshaw! then he has
bowed as low to knaves and fools as to the honest dignity of genius and
virtue.

Sir Peter What, Sir Oliver! do you blame him for not making
enemies?

Sir Oliver Yes, if he has merit enough to deserve them.

Sir Peter Well, well—you'll be convinced when you know him. 'Tis
edification to hear him converse; he professes the noblest sentiments.

Sir Oliver Oh! plague of his sentiments! If he salutes me with a
scrap of morality in his mouth, I shall be sick directly.—But, however,

ACT II
SCENE 3

don't mistake me, Sir Peter; I don't mean to defend Charles's errors: but before I form my judgment of either of them, I intend to make a trial of their hearts; and my friend Rowley and I have planned something for the purpose.

Rowley And Sir Peter shall own he has been for once mistaken.

Sir Peter Oh! my life on Joseph's honour.

Sir Oliver Well—come, give us a bottle of good wine, and we'll drink your lady's health, and tell you our scheme.

Sir Peter *Allons* then!

Sir Oliver And don't, Sir Peter, be so severe against your old friend's son. Odds my life! I am not sorry that he has run out of the course a little: for my part, I hate to see prudence clinging to the green suckers of youth; 'tis like ivy round a sapling, and spoils the growth of the tree. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT THE THIRD

Scene I

Sir Peter Teazle's house

Enter Sir Peter, Sir Oliver and Rowley.

Sir Peter Well, then, we will see this fellow first, and have our wine afterwards:—but how is this, master Rowley? I don't see the jet of your scheme.

Rowley Why, sir, this Mr. Stanley, whom I was speaking of, is nearly related to them by their mother. He was a merchant in Dublin, but has been ruined by a series of undeserved misfortunes. He has applied, by letter, since his confinement, both to Mr. Surface and Charles: from the former he has received nothing but evasive promises of future service, while Charles has done all that his extravagance has left him power to do; and he is, at this time, endeavouring to raise a sum of money, part of which, in the midst of his own distresses, I know he intends for the service of poor Stanley.

Sir Oliver Ah!—he is my brother's son.

Sir Peter Well, but how is Sir Oliver personally to——

Rowley Why, sir, I will inform Charles and his brother, that Stanley has obtained permission to apply in person to his friends, and as they have neither of them ever seen him, let Sir Oliver assume his character, and he will have a fair opportunity of judging, at least, of the benevolence of their dispositions; and believe me, sir, you will find in the youngest brother one who, in the midst of folly and dissipation, has still, as our immortal bard expresses it,

A tear for pity, and a hand Open as day for melting charity.

Sir Peter Pshaw! What signifies his having an open hand or purse either, when he has nothing left to give? Well, well—make the trial, if you please. But where is the fellow whom you brought for Sir Oliver to examine, relative to Charles's affairs?

ACT III
SCENE I

Rowley Below, waiting his commands, and no one can give him better intelligence. This, Sir Oliver, is a friendly Jew, who, to do him justice, has done everything in his power to bring your nephew to a proper sense of his extravagance.

Sir Peter Pray let us have him in.

Rowley [*Calls to Servant.*] Desire Mr. Moses to walk upstairs.

Sir Peter But, pray, why should you suppose he will speak the truth?

Rowley Oh! I have convinced him that he has no chance of recovering certain sums advanced to Charles, but through the bounty of Sir Oliver, who he knows is arrived; so that you may depend on his fidelity to his own interests: I have also another evidence in my power, one Snake, whom I have detected in a matter little short of forgery, and shall shortly produce him to remove some of your prejudices, Sir Peter, relative to Charles and Lady Teazle.

Sir Peter I have heard too much on that subject.

Rowley Here comes the honest Israelite.—[*Enter Moses.*—This is Sir Oliver.

Sir Oliver Sir, I understand you have lately had great dealings with my nephew, Charles.

Moses Yes, Sir Oliver, I have done all I could for him; but he was ruined before he came to me for assistance.

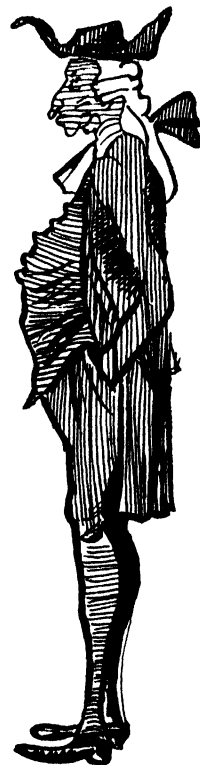
Sir Oliver That was unlucky for, truly, you have had no opportunity of showing your talents.

Moses None at all; I hadn't the pleasure of knowing his distresses till he was some thousands worse than nothing.

Sir Oliver Unfortunate, indeed!—But I suppose you have done all in your power for him, honest Moses?

Moses Yes, he owns that;—this very evening I was to have brought him a gentleman from the city, who does not know him, and will, I believe, advance him some money.

Sir Peter What,—one Charles has never had money from before?



MOSES

Moses Yes,—Mr. Premium, of Crutched Friars, formerly a broker.
Sir Peter Egad, Sir Oliver, a thought strikes me!—Charles, you say,
does not know Mr. Premium?

Moses Not at all.

Sir Peter Now then, Sir Oliver, you may have a better opportunity of satisfying yourself than by an old romancing tale of a poor relation: go with my friend Moses, and represent Premium, and then, I'll answer for it, you'll see your nephew in all his glory.

Sir Oliver Egad, I like this idea better than the other, and I may visit Joseph afterwards as Old Stanley.

Sir Peter True—so you may.

Rowley Well, this is taking Charles rather at a disadvantage, to be sure;—however, Moses, you understand Sir Peter, and will be faithful?

Moses You may depend upon me;—this is near the time I was to have gone.

Sir Oliver I'll accompany you as soon as you please, Moses,—But hold! I forgot one thing—how the plague shall I be able to pass for a Jew?

Moses There is no need—the principal is Christian.

Sir Oliver Is he? I am very sorry to hear it. But then again a'n't I rather too smartly dressed to look like a money-lender?

Sir Peter Not at all; 'twould not be out of character, if you went in your own carriage—would it, Moses?

Moses Not in the least.

Sir Oliver Well—but how must I talk?—there's certainly some cant of usury and mode of treating that I ought to know.

Sir Peter Oh! there's not much to learn. The great point, as I take it, is to be exorbitant enough in your demands—hey, Moses?

Moses Yes, that's a very great point.

Sir Oliver I'll answer for't I'll not be wanting in that. I'll ask him eight or ten per cent on the loan, at least.

Moses If you ask him no more than that, you'll be discovered immediately.

Sir Oliver Hey!—what the plague!—how much then?

ACT III Moses That depends upon circumstances. If he appears not very
SCENE I anxious for the supply, you should require only forty or fifty per
 cent; but if you find him in great distress, and want the moneys very
 bad, you must ask double.

Sir Peter A good honest trade you're learning, Sir Oliver!

Sir Oliver Truly, I think so—and not unprofitable.

Moses Then, you know, you haven't the moneys yourself, but are
 forced to borrow them for him of an old friend.

Sir Oliver Oh! I borrow it of a friend, do I?

Moses And your friend is an unconscionable dog: but you can't
 help it!

Sir Oliver My friend an unconscionable dog, is he?

Moses Yes, and he himself has not the moneys by him, but is forced to
 sell stock at a great loss.

Sir Oliver He is forced to sell stock at a great loss, is he? Well, that's
 very kind of him.

Sir Peter I'faith, Sir Oliver—Mr. Premium, I mean, you'll soon be
 master of the trade. But, Moses! would not you have him run out a
 little against the Annuity Bill? That would be in character, I should
 think.

Moses Very much.

Rowley And lament that a young man now must be at years of dis-
 cretion before he is suffered to ruin himself?

Moses Aye, great pity!

Sir Peter And abuse the public for allowing merit to an Act, whose only
 object is to snatch misfortune and imprudence from the rapacious
 relief of usury, and give the minor a chance of inheriting his estate
 without being undone by coming into possession.

Sir Oliver So—So—Moses shall give me further instructions as we go
 together.

Sir Peter You will not have much time, for your nephew lives hard by.

Sir Oliver Oh! never fear: my tutor appears so able, that though
 Charles lived in the next street, it must be my own fault if I am not a
 complete rogue before I turn the corner. [*Exeunt Sir Oliver and Moses.*]

Sir Peter So, now, I think Sir Oliver will be convinced:—you are

partial, Rowley, and would have prepared Charles for the other plot.
Rowley No, upon my word, Sir Peter.

Sir Peter Well, go bring me this Snake, and I'll hear what he has to say presently.—I see Maria, and want to speak with her. [*Exit Rowley.*] I should be glad to be convinced my suspicions of Lady Teazle and Charles were unjust. I have never yet opened my mind on this subject to my friend Joseph—I am determined I will do it—he will give me his opinion sincerely.

Enter Maria.

So, child, has Mr. Surface returned with you?

Maria No, sir; he was engaged.

Sir Peter Well, Maria, do you not reflect, the more you converse with that amiable young man, what return his partiality for you deserves?

Maria Indeed, Sir Peter, your frequent importunity on this subject distresses me extremely—you compel me to declare, that I know no man who has ever paid me a particular attention, whom I would not prefer to Mr. Surface.

Sir Peter So—here's perverseness!—No, no, Maria, 'tis Charles only whom you would prefer. 'Tis evident his vices and follies have won your heart.

Maria This is unkind, sir. You know I have obeyed you in neither seeing nor corresponding with him: I have heard enough to convince me that he is unworthy my regard. Yet I cannot think it culpable, if, while my understanding severely condemns his vices, my heart suggests some pity for his distresses.

Sir Peter Well, well, pity him as much as you please; but give your heart and hand to a worthier object.

Maria Never to his brother!

Sir Peter Go—perverse and obstinate! but take care, madam; you have never yet known what the authority of a guardian is: don't compel me to inform you of it.

Maria I can only say, you shall not have a just reason. 'Tis true, by my father's will, I am for a short period bound to regard you as his

ACT III substitute; but must cease to think you so, when you would compel
SCENE I me to be miserable. [*Exit Maria.*]

Sir Peter Was ever man so crossed as I am? everything conspiring to fret me! I had not been involved in matrimony a fortnight, before her father, a hale and hearty man, died, on purpose, I believe, for the pleasure of plaguing me with the care of his daughter. But here comes my helpmate—She appears in great good humour. How happy I should be if I could tease her into loving me, though but a little.

Enter Lady Teazle.

Lady Teazle Lud! Sir Peter, I hope you haven't been quarrelling with Maria? It is not using me well to be ill-humoured when I am not by.

Sir Peter Ah! Lady Teazle, you might have the power to make me good-humoured at all times.

Lady Teazle I am sure I wish I had; for I want you to be in a charming sweet temper at this moment. Do be good-humoured now, and let me have two hundred pounds, will you?

Sir Peter Two hundred pounds! what, an't I to be in a good humour without paying for it? But speak to me thus, and i'faith there's nothing I could refuse you. You shall have it; but seal me a bond for the repayment.

Lady Teazle Oh, no—there [*offering her hand*]*—*my note of hand will do as well.

Sir Peter And you shall no longer reproach me with not giving you an independent settlement. I mean shortly to surprise you:—but shall we always live thus, hey?

Lady Teazle If you please. I'm sure I don't care how soon we leave off quarrelling, provided you'll own you were tired first.

Sir Peter Well—then let our future contest be, who shall be most obliging.

Lady Teazle I assure you, Sir Peter, good nature becomes you—you look now as you did before we were married, when you used to walk with me under the elms, and tell me stories of what a gallant you were in your youth, and chuck me under the chin, you would; and ask me



Sir
Oliver
~

if I thought I could love an old fellow, who would deny me nothing—
didn't you?

Sir Peter Yes, yes, and you were as kind and attentive——

Lady Teazle Aye—so I was, and would always take your part, when
my acquaintance used to abuse you, and turn you into ridicule.

Sir Peter Indeed!.

Lady Teazle Aye, and when my cousin Sophy has called you a stiff,
peevish old bachelor, and laughed at me for thinking of marrying one
who might be my father, I have always defended you, and said, I
didn't think you so ugly by any means.

Sir Peter Thank you.

Lady Teazle And I dared say you'd make a very good sort of a husband.

Sir Peter And you prophesied right;
and we shall certainly now be the
happiest couple——

Lady Teazle And never differ again?

Sir Peter No, never!—though at the
same time, indeed, my dear Lady
Teazle, you must watch your temper
very narrowly; for in all our little
quarrels, my dear, if you recollect, my
love, you always began first.

Lady Teazle I beg your pardon, my
dear Sir Peter: indeed, you always
gave the provocation.

Sir Peter Now see, my angel! take
care—contradicting isn't the way to
keep friends.

Lady Teazle Then don't you begin it,
my love!

Sir Peter There, now! you—you are
going on. You don't perceive, my
life, that you are just doing the very
thing which you know always makes
me angry.



LADY TEAZLE Act III

ACT III Lady Teazle Nay, you know if you will be angry without any reason

SCENE I —my dear—

Sir Peter There! now you want to quarrel again.

Lady Teazle No, I am sure I don't. But if you will be so peevish—

Sir Peter There now, who begins first?

Lady Teazle Why you, to be sure. I said nothing—but there's no bearing your temper.

Sir Peter No, no, madam: the fault's in your own temper.

Lady Teazle Aye, you are just what my cousin Sophy said you would be.

Sir Peter Your cousin Sophy is a forward, impertinent gipsy.

Lady Teazle You are a great bear, to abuse my relations. How dare you abuse my relations?

Sir Peter Now may all the plagues of marriage be doubled on me, if ever I try to be friends with you any more!

Lady Teazle So much the better.

Sir Peter No, no, madam: 'tis evident you never cared a pin for me, and I was a madman to marry you—a pert, rural coquette, that had refused half the honest squires in the neighbourhood.

Lady Teazle And I am sure I was a fool to marry you—an old dangling bachelor, who was single at fifty, only because he never could meet with any one who would have him.

Sir Peter Aye, aye, madam; but you were pleased enough to listen to me: you never had such an offer before.

Lady Teazle No! didn't I refuse Sir Tivy Terrier, who everybody said would have been a better match? for his estate is just as good as yours, and he has broke his neck since we have been married.

Sir Peter I have done with you, madam! You are an unfeeling, ungrateful—but there's an end of everything. I believe you capable of anything that is bad.—Yes, madam, I now believe the reports relative to you and Charles, madam.—Yes, madam, *you* and Charles are—not without grounds——

Lady Teazle Take care, Sir Peter! you had better not insinuate any such thing! I'll not be suspected without cause, I promise you.

Sir Peter Very well, madam, very well! A separate maintenance as soon as you please. Yes, madam, or a divorce! I'll make an example

of myself for the benefit of all old bachelors.—Let us separate, madam. ACT III
Lady Teazle Agreed! agreed!—And now, my dear Sir Peter, we are SCENE I
of a mind once more, we may be the happiest couple—and never
differ again, you know— ha! ha! ha! Well, you are going to be in a
passion, I see, and I shall only interrupt you—so, bye-bye. [*Exit.*]
Sir Peter Plagues and tortures! Can't I make her angry either! Oh,
I am the miserablest fellow! but I'll not bear her presuming to keep
her temper: no! she may break my heart, but she shall not keep her
temper. [*Exit.*]

Scene 2

At Charles's house, a chamber

Enter Trip, Moses, and Sir Oliver.

Trip Here, master Moses! if you'll stay a moment, I'll try whether

Mr.—what's the gentleman's name?

Sir Oliver Mr.—[*Apart.*] Moses, what is my name?

Moses Mr. Premium.

Trip Premium—very well. [*Exit taking snuff.*]

Sir Oliver To judge by the servants, one wouldn't believe the master was ruined. But what!—sure, this was my brother's house?

Moses Yes, sir; Mr. Charles bought it of Mr. Joseph, with the furniture, pictures, etc., just as the old gentleman left it. Sir Peter thought it a piece of extravagance in him.

Sir Oliver In my mind, the other's economy in selling it to him was more reprehensible by half.

Enter Trip.

Trip My master says you must wait, gentlemen: he has company, and can't speak with you yet.

Sir Oliver If he knew who it was wanted to see him, perhaps he would not have sent such a message?

Trip Yes, yes, sir; he knows you are here—I did not forget little Premium; no, no, no——

Sir Oliver Very well; and I pray, sir, what may be your name?

Trip Trip, sir; my name is Trip, at your service.

Sir Oliver Well then, Mr. Trip, you have a pleasant sort of place here, I guess?

Trip Why, yes—here are three or four of us pass our time agreeably enough; but then our wages are sometimes a little in arrear—and not very great either—but fifty pounds a year, and find our own bags and bouquets.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] Bags and bouquets! halters and bastinadoes!

Trip And, à propos, Moses—have you been able to get me that little bill discounted?

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] Wants to raise money too!—mercy on me! Has his distresses, I warrant, like a lord, and affects creditors and duns.

Moses 'Twas not to be done, indeed, Mr. Trip.

Trip Good lack, you surprise me! My friend Brush has endorsed it, and I thought when he put his name at the back of a bill 'twas as good as cash.

Moses No! 'twouldn't do.

Trip A small sum—but twenty pounds. Hark'ee, Moses, do you think you couldn't get it me by way of annuity?

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] An annuity! ha! ha! a footman raise money by way of annuity! Well done, luxury, egad!

Moses But you must insure your place.

Trip Oh, with all my heart! I'll insure my place, and my life too, if you please.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] It's more than I would your neck.

Trip But then, Moses, it must be done before this damned Register takes place; one wouldn't like to have one's name made public, you know.

Moses No, certainly. But is there nothing you could deposit?

Trip. Why, nothing capital of my master's wardrobe has dropped lately; but I could give you a mortgage on some of his winter clothes, with equity of redemption before November—or you shall have the reversion of the French velvet, or a post-obit on the blue and silver; —these, I should think, Moses, with a few pair of point ruffles, as a collateral security—hey, my little fellow.

Moses Well, well. [*Bell rings.*]

Trip Egad, I heard the bell! I believe, gentlemen, I can now introduce you. Don't forget the annuity, little Moses This way, gentlemen: insure my place, you know.

Sir Oliver If the man be a shadow of his master, this is the temple of dissipation indeed! [*Exeunt.*]

ACT III
SCENE 3

Scene 3

Charles Surface, Careless, Sir Toby Bumper, etc., discovered at a table, drinking wine.

Charles Surface 'Fore Heaven, 'tis true!—there's the great degeneracy of the age. Many of our acquaintance have taste, spirit, and politeness; but, plague on't, they won't drink.

Careless It is so indeed, Charles! they give in to all the substantial luxuries of the table, and abstain from nothing but wine and wit.

Charles Surface Oh, certainly society suffers by it intolerably; for now, instead of the social spirit of raillery that used to mantle over a glass of bright Burgundy, their conversation is become just like the Spa water they drink, which has all the pertness and flatulence of champagne, without its spirit or flavour.

First Gentleman But what are they to do who love play better than wine?

Careless True: there's Harry diets himself for gaming, and is now under a hazard regimen.

Charles Surface Then he'll have the worst of it. What! you wouldn't train a horse for the course by keeping him from corn? For my part, egad, I am never so successful as when I am a little merry: let me throw on a bottle of champagne, and I never lose—at least, I never feel my losses, which is exactly the same thing.

Second Gentleman Aye, that I believe.

Charles Surface And then, what man can pretend to be a believer in love, who is an abjurer of wine? 'Tis the test by which the lover knows his own heart. Fill a dozen bumpers to a dozen beauties, and she that floats atop is the maid that has bewitched you.

Careless Now then, Charles, be honest, and give us your real favourite.

Charles Surface Why, I have withheld her only in compassion to you. If I toast her, you must give a round of her peers, which is impossible—on earth.

Careless Oh! then we'll find some canonized vestals or heathen goddesses that will do, I warrant!



CHARLES SURFACE'S HOUSE INTERIOR

Charles Surface Here then, bumpers, you rogues! bumpers! Maria! ACT III
Maria—— SCENE 3

First Gentleman Maria who?

Charles Surface Oh, damn the surname—'tis too formal to be registered in Love's calendar; but now, Sir Toby Bumper, beware, we must have beauty superlative.

Careless Nay, never study, Sir Toby: we'll stand to the toast, though your mistress should want an eye, and you know you have a song will excuse you.

Sir Toby Egad, so I have! and I'll give him the song instead of the lady.

SONG

Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen;
Here's to the widow of fifty;
Here's to the flaunting extravagant quean,
And here's to the housewife that's thrifty.

Chorus.

Let the toast pass,—
Drink to the lass,
I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass.

Here's to the charmer whose dimples we prize;
Now to the maid who has none, sir:
Here's to the girl with a pair of blue eyes,
And here's to the nymph with but *one*, sir.

Chorus. Let the toast pass, etc.

Here's to the maid with a bosom of snow;
Now to her that's as brown as a berry:
Here's to the wife with her face full of woe,
And now to the damsel that's merry.

Chorus. Let the toast pass, etc.

ACT III
SCENE 3

For let 'em be clumsy, or let 'em be slim,
Young or ancient, I care not a feather;
So fill a pint bumper quite up to the brim,
And let us e'en toast them together.

Chorus. Let the toast pass, etc.

All Bravo! bravo!

Enter Trip, and whispers Charles.

Charles Surface Gentlemen, you must excuse me a little. Careless, take the chair, will you?

Careless Nay, prithee, Charles, what now? This is one of your peerless beauties, I suppose, has dropped in by chance?

Charles Surface No, faith! To tell you the truth, 'tis a Jew and a broker, who are come by appointment.

Careless Oh, damn it! let's have the Jew in.

First Gentleman Aye, and the broker too, by all means.

Second Gentleman Yes, yes, the Jew and the broker.

Charles Surface Egad, with all my heart! Trip, bid the gentlemen walk in—[*Exit Trip.*] Though there's one of them a stranger, I can tell you.

Careless Charles, let us give them some generous Burgundy, and perhaps they'll grow conscientious.

Charles Surface Oh, hang 'em, no! wine does but draw forth a man's natural qualities, and to make them drink would only be to whet their knavery.

Enter Trip, Sir Oliver, and Moses.



SIR TOBY BUMPER

Charles Surface So, honest Moses, walk in; walk in, pray, Mr. Premium—that's the gentleman's name, isn't it, Moses?

Moses Yes, sir.

Charles Surface Set chairs, Trip—sit down, Mr. Premium—glasses, Trip—sit down, Moses. Come, Mr. Premium, I'll give you a sentiment; here's *Success to usury*—Moses, fill the gentleman a bumper.

Moses *Success to usury!*

Careless Right, Moses—usury is prudence and industry, and deserves to succeed.

Sir Oliver Then—*here's all the success it deserves!*

Careless No, no, that won't do, Mr. Premium; you have demurred to the toast, and must drink it in a pint bumper.

First Gentleman A pint bumper, at least.

Moses Oh, pray, sir, consider—Mr. Premium's a gentleman.

Careless And therefore loves good wine.

Second Gentleman Give Moses a quart glass—this is mutiny, and a high contempt for the chair.

Careless Here, now for't! I'll see justice done, to the last drop of my bottle.

Sir Oliver Nay, pray, gentlemen—I did not expect this usage.

Charles Surface No, hang it, you shan't! Mr. Premium's a stranger.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] Odd! I wish I was well out of their company.

Careless Plague on 'em, then!—if they won't drink, we'll not sit down with them. Come, Harry, the dice are in the next room—Charles, you'll join us when you have finished your business with these gentlemen?

Charles Surface I will! I will! [*Exeunt Gentlemen.*] Careless!

Careless [*Returning.*] Well!

Charles Surface Perhaps I may want you.

Careless Oh, you know I am always ready: word, note, or bond, 'tis all the same to me. [*Exit.*]

Moses Sir, this is Mr. Premium, a gentleman of the strictest honour and secrecy; and always performs what he undertakes. Mr. Premium, this is——

Charles Surface Pshaw! have done.—Sir, my friend Moses is a very

ACT III
SCENE 3

honest fellow, but a little slow at expression: he'll be an hour giving us our titles. Mr. Premium, the plain state of the matter is this: I am an extravagant young fellow who want to borrow money—you I take to be a prudent old fellow, who have got money to lend. I am blockhead enough to give fifty per cent sooner than not have it; and you, I presume, are rogue enough to take an hundred if you can get it. Now, sir, you see we are acquainted at once, and may proceed to business without further ceremony.

Sir Oliver Exceeding frank, upon my word.—I see, sir, you are not a man of many compliments.

Charles Surface O, no, sir! plain dealing in business I always think best.

Sir Oliver Sir, I like you the better for it—however, you are mistaken in one thing; I have no money to lend, but I believe I could procure some of a friend; but then he's an unconscionable dog, isn't he, Moses? And must sell stock to accommodate you, mustn't he, Moses?

Moses Yes, indeed! You know I always speak the truth, and scorn to tell a lie!

Charles Surface Right. People that speak truth generally do: but these are trifles, Mr. Premium. What! I know money isn't to be bought without paying for't!

Sir Oliver Well—but what security could you give? You have no land, I suppose?

Charles Surface Not a mole-hill, nor a twig, but what's in beau-pots at the window!

Sir Oliver Nor any stock, I presume?

Charles Surface Nothing but live stock—and that's only a few pointers and ponies. But pray, Mr. Premium, are you acquainted at all with any of my connexions?

Sir Oliver Why, to say truth, I am.

Charles Surface Then you must know that I have a dev'lish rich uncle in the East Indies, Sir Oliver Surface, from whom I have the greatest expectations.

Sir Oliver That you have a wealthy uncle I have heard; but how your expectations will turn out is more, I believe, than you can tell.

Charles Surface O no!—there can be no doubt. They tell me I'm a prodigious favourite, and that he talks of leaving me everything.

Sir Oliver Indeed! this is the first I've heard of it.

Charles Surface Yes, yes, 'tis just so. Moses knows 'tis true, don't you, Moses?

Moses Oh, yes, I'll swear to it.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] Egad, they'll persuade me presently I'm at Bengal.

Charles Surface Now I propose, Mr. Premium, if it's agreeable to you, a post-obit on Sir Oliver's life; though at the same time the old fellow has been so liberal to me, that I give you my word I should be very sorry to hear anything had happened to him.

Sir Oliver Not more than I should, I assure you. But the bond you mention happens to be just the worst security you could offer me—for I might live to an hundred, and never recover the principal.

Charles Surface Oh, yes, you would—the moment Sir Oliver dies, you know you would come on me for the money.

Sir Oliver Then I believe I should be the most unwelcome dun you ever had in your life.

Charles Surface What! I suppose you are afraid now that Sir Oliver is too good a life?

Sir Oliver No, indeed, I am not; though I have heard he is as hale and healthy as any man of his years in Christendom.

Charles Surface There again now you are misinformed. No, no, the climate has hurt him considerably, poor Uncle Oliver! Yes, he breaks apace, I am told—and is so much altered lately, that his nearest relations wouldn't know him.

Sir Oliver No! ha! ha! ha! so much altered lately that his nearest relations wouldn't know him!—that's droll, egad—ha! ha! ha!



CARELESS

ACT III Charles Surface Ha! ha!—you're glad to hear that, little Premium?

SCENE 3 Sir Oliver No, no, I'm not.

Charles Surface Yes, yes, you are—ha! ha! ha!—You know that mends your chance.

Sir Oliver But I'm told Sir Oliver is coming over?—nay, some say he is actually arrived?

Charles Surface Pshaw! Sure I must know better than you whether he's come or not. No, no, rely on't he's at this moment at Calcutta— isn't he, Moses?

Moses Yes, certainly.

Sir Oliver Very true, as you say, you must know better than I, though I have it from pretty good authority—haven't I, Moses?

Moses Yes, most undoubted!

Sir Oliver But, sir, as I understand you want a few hundreds immediately—is there nothing you would dispose of?

Charles Surface How do you mean?

Sir Oliver For instance, now, I have heard that your father left behind him a great quantity of massy old plate?

Charles Surface O Lud!—that's gone long ago.—Moses can tell you how better than I.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] Good luck! all the family race-cups and corporation bowls!—Then it was also supposed that his library was one of the most valuable and complete——

Charles Surface Yes, yes, so it was—vastly too much so for a private gentleman. For my part, I was always of a communicative disposition, so I thought it a shame to keep so much knowledge to myself.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] Mercy upon me! Learning that had run in the family like an heirloom!—Pray, what are become of the books?

Charles Surface You must inquire of the auctioneer, master Premium, for I don't believe even Moses can direct you.

Moses I never meddle with books.

Sir Oliver So, so, nothing of the family property left, I suppose?

Charles Surface Not much, indeed; unless you have a mind to the family pictures. I have got a room full of ancestors above, and if you have a taste for paintings, egad, you shall have them a bargain.

Sir Oliver Hey! what the devil! sure, you would not sell your fore-fathers, would you?

Charles Surface Every man of 'em to the best bidder.

Sir Oliver What! your great uncles and aunts?

Charles Surface Aye, and my great grandfathers and grandmothers too.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] Now I give him up.—What the plague have you no bowels for your own kindred? Odds life, do you take me for Shylock in the play, that you would raise money of me on your own flesh and blood?

Charles Surface Nay, my little broker, don't be angry: what need you care if you have your money's worth?

Sir Oliver Well, I'll be the purchaser: I think I can dispose of the family canvas.—[*Aside.*] Oh, I'll never forgive him this! never!

Enter Careless.

Careless Come, Charles, what keeps you?

Charles Surface I can't come yet: i'faith we are going to have a sale above stairs; here's little Premium will buy all my ancestors!

Careless Oh, burn your ancestors!

Charles Surface No, he may do that afterwards, if he pleases. Stay, Careless, we want you: egad, you shall be auctioneer; so come along with us.

Careless Oh, have with you, if that's the case. I can handle a hammer as well as a dice-box!—a-going—a-going.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] Oh, the profligates!

Charles Surface Come, Moses, you shall be appraiser, if we want one. Gad's life, little Premium, you don't seem to like the business?

Sir Oliver Oh, yes, I do, vastly. Ha! ha! ha! yes, yes, I think it a rare joke to sell one's family by auction—ha! ha!—[*Aside.*]—Oh, the prodigal!

Charles Surface To be sure! when a man wants money, where the plague should he get assistance if he can't make free with his own relations? [*Exeunt.*]

ACT THE FOURTH

Scene I

Picture room at Charles's house

Enter Charles, Sir Oliver, Moses, and Careless.

Charles Surface Walk in, gentlemen, pray walk in;—here they are, the family of the Surfaces, up to the Conquest.

Sir Oliver And, in my opinion, a goodly collection.

Charles Surface Aye, aye, these are done in the true spirit of portrait painting;—no *volunteer grace* and expression, not like the works of your modern Raphael, who gives you the strongest resemblance, yet contrives to make your own portrait independent of you; so that you may sink the original and not hurt the picture. No, no; the merit of these is the inveterate likeness—all stiff and awkward as the originals, and like nothing in human nature besides.

Sir Oliver Ah! we shall never see such figures of men again.

Charles Surface I hope not.—Well, you see, master Premium, what a domestic character I am; here I sit of an evening surrounded by my family.—But, come, get to your pulpit, Mr. Auctioneer; here's an old gouty chair of my grandfather's will answer the purpose.

Careless Aye, aye, this will do.—But, Charles, I have ne'er a hammer; and what's an auctioneer without his hammer?

Charles Surface Egad, that's true;—what parchment have we here?—*Richard heir to Thomas*.—Oh, our genealogy in full. Here, Careless—you shall have no common bit of mahogany, here's the family tree for you, you rogue,—this shall be your hammer, and now you may knock down my ancestors with their own pedigree.

Sir Oliver [*Aside*.] What an unnatural rogue!—an *ex post facto* parricide!

Careless Yes, yes, here's a list of your generation indeed;—faith, Charles, this is the most convenient thing you could have found for the



business, for 'twill serve not only as a hammer, but a catalogue into the bargain.—But come, begin—A-going, a-going, a-going!

Charles Surface Bravo, Careless!—Well, here's my great uncle, Sir Richard Raveline, a marvellous good general in his day, I assure you. He served in all the Duke of Marlborough's wars, and got that cut over his eye at the battle of Malplaquet.—What say you, Mr. Premium?—look at him—there's a hero for you, not cut out of his feathers, as your modern clipt captains are, but enveloped in wig and regimentals, as a general should be.—What do you bid?

Sir Oliver [*Aside to Moses.*] Bid him speak.

Moses Mr. Premium would have *you* speak.

Charles Surface Why, then, he shall have him for ten pounds, and I'm sure that's not dear for a staff-officer.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] Heaven deliver me! his famous uncle Richard for ten pounds! —Very well, sir, I take him at that.

Charles Surface Careless, knock him down my uncle Richard.—Here, now, is a maiden sister of his, my great aunt Deborah, done by Kneller, thought to be in his best manner, and esteemed a very formidable likeness.—There she is, you see, a shepherdess feeding her flock.—You shall have her for five pounds ten—the sheep are worth the money.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] Ah! poor Deborah! a woman who set such a value on herself!—Five pounds ten—she's mine.

Charles Surface Knock down my aunt Deborah!—Here, now, are two that were a sort of cousins of theirs. You see, Moses, these pictures were done some time ago, when beaux wore wigs, and the ladies their own hair.

Sir Oliver Yes, truly, head-dresses appear to have been a little lower in those days.

Charles Surface Well, take this couple for the same.

Moses 'Tis a good bargain.

Charles Surface This, now, is a grandfather of my mother's, a learned judge, well known on the western circuit.—What do you rate him at, Moses?

Moses Four guineas.

ACT IV Charles Surface Four guineas!—Gad's life, you don't bid me the
SCENE I price of his wig.—Mr. Premium, you have more respect for the wool-
sack; do let us knock his lordship down at fifteen.

Sir Oliver By all means.

Careless Gone!

Charles Surface And there are two brothers of his, William and Walter
Blunt, Esquires, both members of Parliament, and noted speakers,
and what's very extraordinary, I believe this is the first time they were
ever bought or sold.

Sir Oliver That is very extraordinary, indeed! I'll take them at your
own price, for the honour of Parliament.

Careless Well said, little Premium!—I'll knock them down at forty.

Charles Surface Here's a jolly fellow—I don't know what relation,
but he was mayor of Norwich: take him at eight pounds.

Sir Oliver No, no; six will do for the mayor.

Charles Surface Come, make it guineas, and I'll throw you the two
aldermen there into the bargain.

Sir Oliver They're mine.

Charles Surface Careless, knock down the mayor and aldermen.—But
plague on't, we shall be all day retailing in this manner; do let us
deal wholesale: what say you, little Premium? Give me three
hundred pounds for the rest of the family in the lump.

Careless Aye, aye, that will be the best way.

Sir Oliver Well, well, anything to accommodate you;—they are mine.

But there is one portrait which you have always passed over.

Careless What, that ill-looking little fellow over the settee?

Sir Oliver Yes, sir, I mean that, though I don't think him so ill-looking
a little fellow, by any means.

Charles Surface What, that?—Oh! that's my uncle Oliver; 'twas
done before he went to India.

Careless Your uncle Oliver!—Gad, then you'll never be friends,
Charles. That, now, to me, is as stern a looking rogue as ever I saw;
an unforgiving eye, and a damned disinheriting countenance! an
inveterate knave, depend on't. Don't you think so, little Premium?

Sir Oliver Upon my soul, sir, I do not; I think it is as honest a looking

face as any in the room, dead or alive;—but I suppose uncle Oliver goes with the rest of the lumber?

Charles Surface No, hang it; I'll not part with poor Noll. The old fellow has been very good to me, and, egad, I'll keep his picture while I've a room to put it in.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] The rogue's my nephew after all!—But, sir, I have somehow taken a fancy to that picture.

Charles Surface I'm sorry for't, for you certainly will not have it. Oons, haven't you got enough of 'em?

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] I forgive him everything!—But, sir, when I take a whim in my head I don't value money. I'll give you as much for that as for all the rest.

Charles Surface Don't tease me, master broker; I tell you I'll not part with it, and there's an end of it.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] How like his father the dog is!—Well, well, I have done.—I did not perceive it before, but I think I never saw such a striking resemblance—Here is a draft for your sum.

Charles Surface Why, 'tis for eight hundred pounds.

Sir Oliver You will not let Sir Oliver go?

Charles Surface Zounds! no!—I tell you once more.

Sir Oliver Then never mind the difference, we'll balance that another time—but give me your hand on the bargain; you are an honest fellow, Charles—I beg pardon, sir, for being so free.—Come, Moses.

Charles Surface Egad, this is a whimsical old fellow! But hark'ee, Premium, you'll prepare lodgings for these gentlemen.

Sir Oliver Yes, yes, I'll send for them in a day or two.

Charles Surface But, hold; do now send a genteel conveyance for them, for, I assure you, they were most of them used to ride in their own carriages.

Sir Oliver I will, I will—for all but Oliver.

Charles Surface Aye, all but the little honest nabob.

Sir Oliver You're fixed on that?

Charles Surface Peremptorily.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] A dear extravagant rogue! Good-day!—Come,

ACT IV Moses.—Let me hear now who dares call him profligate! [*Exeunt*
SCENE I *Sir Oliver, Surface and Moses.*]

Careless Why, this is the oddest genius of the sort I ever saw.

Charles Surface Egad, he's the prince of brokers, I think. I wonder how the devil Moses got acquainted with so honest a fellow.—Hah! here's Rowley; do, Careless, say I'll join the company in a moment.

Careless I will—but don't let that old blockhead persuade you to squander any of that money on old musty debts, or any such nonsense; for tradesmen, Charles, are the most exorbitant fellows.

Charles Surface Very true, and paying them is only encouraging them.

Careless Nothing else.

Charles Surface Aye, aye, never fear. [*Exit Careless.*—Soh! this was an odd old fellow, indeed.—Let me see—two-thirds of this is mine by right,—five hundred and thirty odd pounds. 'Fore Heaven! I find one's ancestors are more valuable relations than I took them for!—Ladies and gentlemen, your most obedient and very grateful humble servant.—

Enter Rowley.

Hah! old Rowley! egad, you are just come in time to take leave of your old acquaintance.

Rowley Yes, I heard they were a-going. But I wonder you can have such spirits under so many distresses.

Charles Surface Why, there's the point! my distresses are so many, that I can't afford to part with my spirits; but I shall be rich and splenetic, all in good time. However, I suppose you are surprised that I am not more sorrowful at parting with so many near relations; to be sure, 'tis very affecting: but rot 'em you see they never move a muscle, so why should I?

Rowley There's no making you serious a moment.

Charles Surface Yes, faith, I am so now. Here, my honest Rowley, here, get me this changed directly, and take a hundred pounds of it immediately, to old Stanley.

Rowley A hundred pounds! Consider only——

Charles Surface Gad's life, don't talk about it: poor Stanley's wants

are pressing, and if you don't make haste, we shall have some one call that has a better right to the money.

Rowley Ah! there's the point! I never will cease dunning you with the old proverb——

Charles Surface 'Be just before you're generous.'—Why, so I would if I could; but Justice is an old lame hobbling beldame, and I can't get her to keep pace with Generosity for the soul of me.

Rowley Yet, Charles, believe me, one hour's reflection——

Charles Surface Aye, aye, it's all very true; but, hark'ee, Rowley, while I have, by Heaven I'll give; so damn your economy, and now for hazard. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV
SCENE 2

Scene 2

The Parlour

Enter Sir Oliver and Moses.

Moses Well, sir, I think, as Sir Peter said, you have seen Mr. Charles in high glory; 'tis great pity he's so extravagant.

Sir Oliver True, but he would not sell my picture.

Moses And loves wine and women so much.

Sir Oliver But he would not sell my picture.

Moses And games so deep.

Sir Oliver But he would not sell my picture.—Oh, here's Rowley.

Enter Rowley.

Rowley So, Sir Oliver, I find you have made a purchase—

Sir Oliver Yes, yes, our young rake has parted with his ancestors like old tapestry.

Rowley And here has he commissioned me to redeliver you part of the purchase-money—I mean, though, in your necessitous character of old Stanley.

Moses Ah! there is the pity of all; he is so damned charitable.

Rowley And I left a hosier and two tailors in the hall, who, I'm sure, won't be paid, and this hundred would satisfy them.

Sir Oliver Well, well, I'll pay his debts, and his benevolences too.—But now I am no more a broker, and you shall introduce me to the elder brother as old Stanley.

Rowley Not yet awhile; Sir Peter, I know, means to call there about this time.

Enter Trip.

Trip Oh, gentlemen, I beg pardon for not showing you out; this way.—Moses, a word—[*Exeunt Moses and Trip.*]

Sir Oliver There's a fellow for you—would you believe it, that puppy intercepted the Jew on our coming, and wanted to raise money before he got to his master.

Rowley Indeed!

ACT IV

Sir Oliver Yes, they are now planning an annuity business.—Ah! master Rowley, in my days servants were content with the follies of their masters, when they were worn a little threadbare; but now, they have their vices, like their birthday clothes, with the gloss on.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 2

Scene 3

A Library

Joseph Surface and a Servant.

Joseph Surface No letter from Lady Teazle?

Servant No, sir.

Joseph Surface I am surprised she has not sent, if she is prevented from coming. Sir Peter certainly does not suspect me. Yet, I wish I may not lose the heiress, through the scrape I have drawn myself into with the wife; however, Charles's imprudence and bad character are great points in my favour. [*Knock without.*]

Servant Sir, I believe that must be Lady Teazle.

Joseph Surface Hold!—See whether it is or not before you go to the door: I have a particular message for you, if it should be my brother.

Servant 'Tis her ladyship, sir; she always leaves her chair at the milliner's in the next street.

Joseph Surface Stay, stay; draw that screen before the window—that will do;—my opposite neighbour is a maiden lady of so curious a temper.—[*Servant draws the screen, and exit.*—] I have a difficult hand to play in this affair. Lady Teazle has lately suspected my views on Maria; but she must by no means be let into that secret,—at least, till I have her more in my power.

Enter Lady Teazle.

Lady Teazle What, sentiment in soliloquy? Have you been very impatient now?—O Lud! don't pretend to look grave.—I vow I couldn't come before.

Joseph Surface Oh, madam, punctuality is a species of constancy, a very unfashionable quality in a lady.

Lady Teazle Upon my word you ought to pity me. Do you know Sir Peter is grown so ill-tempered to me of late, and so jealous of Charles, too; that's the best of the story, isn't it?

Joseph Surface [*Aside.*] I am glad my scandalous friends keep that up.



JOSEPH SURFACE'S HOUSE, THE LIBRARY

Lady Teazle I'm sure I wish he would let Maria marry him, and then perhaps he would be convinced; don't you, Mr. Surface?

Joseph Surface [*Aside.*] Indeed I do not.—Oh, certainly I do! for then my dear Lady Teazle would also be convinced, how wrong her suspicions were of my having any design on the silly girl.

Lady Teazle Well, well, I'm inclined to believe you. But isn't it provoking, to have the most ill-natured things said of one?—And there's my friend Lady Sneerwell has circulated I don't know how many scandalous tales of me, and all without any foundation too—that's what vexes me.

Joseph Surface Aye, madam, to be sure, that is the provoking circumstance—without foundation; yes, yes, there's the mortification, indeed; for when a scandalous story is believed against one, there certainly is no comfort like the consciousness of having deserved it.

Lady Teazle No, to be sure, then I'd forgive their malice; but to attack me, who am really so innocent, and who never say an ill-natured thing of anybody—that is, of my friends; and then Sir Peter, too, to have him so peevish, and so suspicious, when I know the integrity of my own heart—indeed 'tis monstrous!

Joseph Surface But, my dear Lady Teazle, 'tis your own fault if you suffer it. When a husband entertains a groundless suspicion of his wife, and withdraws his confidence from her, the original compact is broke, and she owes it to the honour of her sex to endeavour to outwit him.

Lady Teazle Indeed!—so that if he



LADY TEAZLE Act IV

ACT IV suspects me without cause, it follows, that the best way of curing
SCENE 3 his jealousy is to give him reason for't.

Joseph Surface Undoubtedly—for your husband should never be deceived in you—and in that case, it becomes you to be frail in compliance to his discernment.

Lady Teazle To be sure, what you say is very reasonable, and when the consciousness of my innocence——

Joseph Surface Ah! my dear madam, there is the great mistake: 'tis this very conscious innocence that is of the greatest prejudice to you. What is it makes you negligent of forms, and careless of the world's opinion?—why, the consciousness of your own innocence. What makes you thoughtless in your conduct, and apt to run into a thousand little imprudences?—why, the consciousness of your own innocence. What makes you impatient of Sir Peter's temper, and outrageous at his suspicions?—why, the consciousness of your innocence.

Lady Teazle 'Tis very true!

Joseph Surface Now, my dear Lady Teazle, if you would but once make a trifling *faux pas*, you can't conceive how cautious you would grow and how ready to humour and agree with your husband.

Lady Teazle Do you think so?

Joseph Surface Oh! I am sure on't; and then you would find all scandal would cease at once, for, in short, your character at present is like a person in a plethora, absolutely dying from too much health.

Lady Teazle So, so; then I perceive your prescription is, that I must sin in my own defence, and part with my virtue to preserve my reputation?

Joseph Surface Exactly so, upon my credit, ma'am.

Lady Teazle Well, certainly this is the oddest doctrine, and the newest receipt for avoiding calumny!

Joseph Surface An infallible one, believe me. Prudence, like experience, must be paid for.

Lady Teazle Why, if my understanding were once convinced——

Joseph Surface Oh, certainly, your understanding, madam, should be convinced.—Yes, yes—Heaven forbid I should persuade you to do

anything you thought wrong. No, no, I have too much honour to desire it.

Lady Teazle Don't you think we may as well leave *honour* out of the question?

Joseph Surface Ah! the ill effects of your country education, I see, still remain with you.

Lady Teazle I doubt they do indeed; and I will fairly own to you, that if I could be persuaded to do wrong, it would be by Sir Peter's ill usage sooner than your *honourable logic*, after all.

Joseph Surface [*Taking her hand.*] Then, by this hand, which he is unworthy of——

Enter Servant.

'Sdeath, you blockhead—what do you want?

Servant I beg your pardon, sir, but I thought you would not choose Sir Peter to come up without announcing him.

Joseph Surface Sir Peter!—Oons and the devil!

Lady Teazle Sir Peter! O Lud—I'm ruined—I'm ruined!

Servant Sir, 'twasn't I let him in.

Lady Teazle Oh! I'm quite undone! What will become of me now, Mr. Logic? Oh! he's on the stairs—I'll get behind here—and if ever I'm so imprudent again——[*Goes behind the screen.*]

Joseph Surface Give me that book. [*Sits down, Servant pretends to adjust his hair.*]

Enter Sir Peter.

Sir Peter Aye, ever improving himself—Mr. Surface, Mr. Surface——

Joseph Surface Oh! my dear Sir Peter, I beg your pardon—[*Gaping—throws away the book.*—] I have been dozing over a stupid book.—Well, I am much obliged to you for this call. You haven't been here, I believe, since I fitted up this room.—Books, you know, are the only things I am a coxcomb in.

Sir Peter 'Tis very neat indeed.—Well, well, that's proper; and you make even your screen a source of knowledge—hung, I perceive, with maps.

ACT IV Joseph Surface Oh yes, I find great use in that screen.

SCENE 3 Sir Peter I dare you you must, certainly, when you want to find anything in a hurry.

Joseph Surface [*Aside.*] Aye, or to hide anything in a hurry either.

Sir Peter Well, I have a little private business——

Joseph Surface [*To the Servant.*] You need not stay.

Servant No, sir. [*Exit.*]

Joseph Surface Here's a chair, Sir Peter—I beg——

Sir Peter Well, now we are alone, there is a subject, my dear friend, on which I wish to unburthen my mind to you—a point of the greatest moment to my peace; in short, my dear friend, Lady Teazle's conduct of late has made me extremely unhappy.

Joseph Surface Indeed! I am very sorry to hear it.

Sir Peter Aye, 'tis but too plain she has not the least regard for me; but, what's worse, I have a pretty good authority to suspect she has formed an attachment to another.

Joseph Surface You astonish me!

Sir Peter Yes; and, between ourselves, I think I've discovered the person.

Joseph Surface How! you alarm me exceedingly.

Sir Peter Ah, my dear friend, I knew you would sympathize with me!

Joseph Surface Yes—believe me, Sir Peter, such a discovery would hurt me just as much as it would you.

Sir Peter I am convinced of it.—Ah! it is a happiness to have a friend whom one can trust even with one's family secrets. But have you no guess who I mean?

Joseph Surface I haven't the most distant idea. It can't be Sir Benjamin Backbite!

Sir Peter O, no! What say you to Charles?

Joseph Surface My brother! impossible! O no, Sir Peter, you must not credit the scandalous insinuations you may hear. No, no, Charles to be sure has been charged with many things of this kind, but I can never think he would meditate so gross an injury.

Sir Peter Ah, my dear friend, the goodness of your own heart misleads you. You judge of others by yourself.

Joseph Surface Certainly, Sir Peter, the heart that is conscious of its own integrity is ever slow to credit another's treachery.

Sir Peter True—but your brother has no sentiment—you never hear him talk so.

Joseph Surface Yet, I can't but think Lady Teazle herself has too much principle.

Sir Peter Aye,—but what is principle against the flattery of a handsome, lively young fellow?

Joseph Surface That's very true.

Sir Peter And then, you know, the difference of our ages makes it very improbable that she should have a great affection for me; and if she were to be frail, and I were to make it public, why the town would only laugh at me—the foolish old bachelor, who had married a girl.

Joseph Surface That's true, to be sure—they *would* laugh.

Sir Peter Laugh—aye, and make ballads, and paragraphs, and the devil knows what of me.

Joseph Surface No—you must never make it public.

Sir Peter But then again—that the nephew of my old friend, Sir Oliver, should be the person to attempt such a wrong, hurts me more nearly.

Joseph Surface Aye, there's the point.—When ingratitude barbs the dart of injury, the wound has double danger in it.

Sir Peter Aye—I, that was, in a manner, left his guardian; in whose house he had been so often entertained; who never in my life denied him—my advice.

Joseph Surface Oh, 'tis not to be credited. There may be a man capable of such baseness, to be sure; but, for my part, till you can give me positive proofs, I cannot but doubt it. However, if this should be proved on him, he is no longer a brother of mine—I disclaim kindred with him: for the man who can break through the laws of hospitality, and attempt the wife of his friend, deserves to be branded as the pest of society.

Sir Peter What a difference there is between you! What noble sentiments!

ACT IV Joseph Surface Yet, I cannot suspect Lady Teazle's honour.

SCENE 3 Sir Peter I am sure I wish to think well of her, and to remove all ground of quarrel between us. She has lately reproached me more than once, with having made no settlement on her; and, in our last quarrel, she almost hinted that she should not break her heart if I was dead. Now, as we seem to differ in our ideas of expense, I have resolved she shall be her own mistress in that respect for the future; and if I were to die, she shall find that I have not been inattentive to her interests while living. Here, my friend, are the drafts of two deeds, which I wish to have your opinion on.—By one, she will enjoy eight hundred a year independent while I live, and, by the other, the bulk of my fortune after my death.

Joseph Surface This conduct, Sir Peter, is indeed truly generous.—

[*Aside.*] I wish it may not corrupt my pupil.

Sir Peter Yes, I am determined she shall have no cause to complain, though I would not have her acquainted with the latter instance of my affection yet awhile.

Joseph Surface [*Aside.*] Nor I, if I could help it.

Sir Peter And now, my dear friend, if you please, we will talk over the situation of your hopes with Maria.

Joseph Surface [*Softly.*] No, no, Sir Peter; another time, if you please.

Sir Peter I am sensibly chagrined at the little progress you seem to make in her affections.

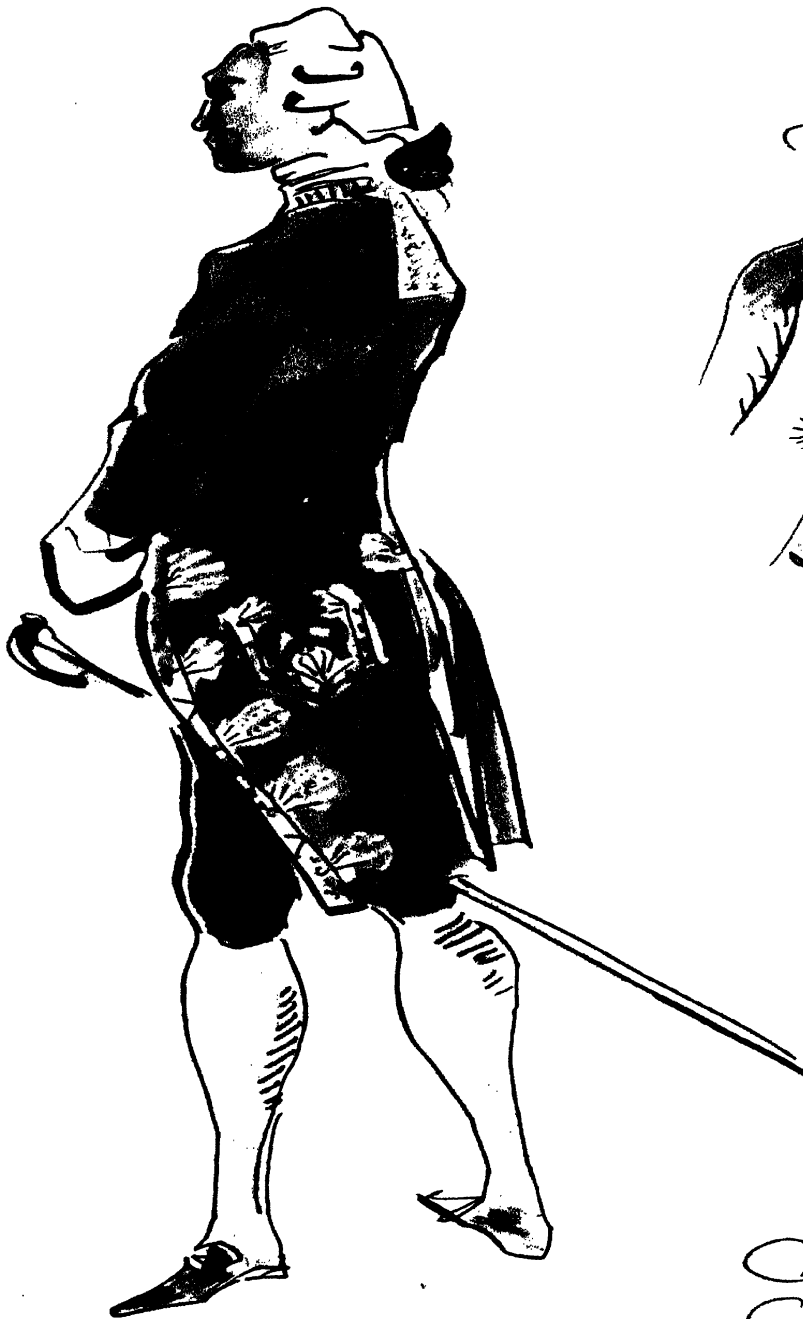
Joseph Surface [*Softly.*] I beg you will not mention it. What are my disappointments when your happiness is in debate!—[*Aside.*] 'Sdeath I shall be ruined every way.

Sir Peter And though you are so averse to my acquainting Lady Teazle with *your* passion I am sure she's not your enemy in the affair.

Joseph Surface Pray, Sir Peter, now, oblige me. I am really too much affected by the subject we have been speaking of, to bestow a thought on my own concerns. The man who is entrusted with his friend's distresses can never——

Enter Servant.

Well, sir?



Charles
Surface

Servant Your brother, sir, is speaking to a gentleman in the street, and says he knows you are within.

Joseph Surface 'Sdeath, blockhead, I'm not within—I'm out for the day.

Sir Peter Stay—hold—a thought has struck me:—you shall be at home.

Joseph Surface Well, well, let him up. [*Exit Servant.*] [*Aside.*] He'll interrupt Sir Peter, however.

Sir Peter Now, my good friend, oblige me, I entreat you. Before Charles comes, let me conceal myself somewhere—then do you tax him on the point we have been talking on, and his answers may satisfy me at once.

Joseph Surface Oh, fie, Sir Peter! would you have me join in so mean a trick?—to trepan my brother too?

Sir Peter Nay, you tell me you are *sure* he is innocent; if so, you do him the greatest service by giving him an opportunity to clear himself, and you will set my heart at rest. Come, you shall not refuse me: here, behind this screen will be—Hey! what the devil! there seems to be one listener there already—I'll swear I saw a petticoat.

Joseph Surface Ha, ha! ha! Well, this is ridiculous enough. I'll tell you, Sir Peter, though I hold a man of intrigue to be a most despicable character, yet, you know, it does not follow that one is to be an absolute Joseph either! Hark'ee, 'tis a little French milliner—a silly rogue that plagues me,—and having some character to lose, on your coming, sir, she ran behind the screen.

Sir Peter Ah! you rogue! But, egad, she has overheard all I have been saying of my wife.

Joseph Surface Oh, 'twill never go any further, you may depend upon it.

Sir Peter No! then, i'faith, let her hear it out.—Here's a closet will do as well.

Joseph Surface Well, go in there.

Sir Peter [*Going into the closet.*] Sly rogue! sly rogue!

Joseph Surface A narrow escape, indeed! and a curious situation I'm in, to part man and wife in this manner.

Lady Teazle [*Peeping.*] Couldn't I steal off?

Joseph Surface Keep close, my angel!

ACT IV Sir Peter [*Peeping.*] Joseph, tax him home.
SCENE 3 Joseph Surface Back, my dear friend!
Lady Teazle Couldn't you lock Sir Peter in?
Joseph Surface Be still, my life!
Sir Peter [*Peeping.*] You're sure the little milliner won't blab?
Joseph Surface In, in, my good Sir Peter.—'Foregad, I wish I had a key to the door.

Enter Charles Surface.

Charles Surface Holla! brother, what has been the matter? Your fellow would not let me up at first. What! have you had a Jew or a wench with you?

Joseph Surface Neither, brother, I assure you.

Charles Surface But what has made Sir Peter steal off? I thought he had been with you.

Joseph Surface He *was*, brother; but hearing you were coming, he did not choose to stay.

Charles Surface What! was the old gentleman afraid I wanted to borrow money of him?

Joseph Surface No, sir: but I am sorry to find, Charles, you have lately given that worthy man grounds for great uneasiness.

Charles Surface Yes, yes, yes!—they tell me I do that to a great many worthy men.—But how so, pray?

Joseph Surface To be plain with you, brother—he thinks you are endeavouring to gain Lady Teazle's affections from him.

Charles Surface Who, I? O Lud, not I, upon my word. Ha! ha! ha! ha! so the old fellow has found out that he has got a young wife, has he?—or, what's worse, has her ladyship discovered she has an old husband?

Joseph Surface This is no subject to jest upon, brother. He who can laugh——

Charles Surface True, true, as you were going to say—then, seriously, I never had the least idea of what you charge me with, upon my honour.

Joseph Surface [*Aloud.*] Well, it will give Sir Peter great satisfaction to hear this.

Charles Surface To be sure, I once thought the lady seemed to have taken a fancy to me; but, upon my soul, I never gave her the least encouragement:—besides, you know my attachment to Maria.

Joseph Surface But sure, brother, even if Lady Teazle had betrayed the fondest partiality for you——

Charles Surface Why, look ye, Joseph, I hope I shall never deliberately do a dishonourable action: but if a pretty woman was purposely to throw herself in my way—and that pretty woman married to a man old enough to be her father——

Joseph Surface Well——

Charles Surface Why, I believe I should be obliged to borrow a little of your morality, that's all.—But, brother, do you know now that you surprise me exceedingly, by naming *me* with Lady Teazle; for, 'faith, I always understood *you* were her favourite.

Joseph Surface For shame, Charles! This retort is foolish.

Charles Surface Nay, I swear I have seen you exchange such significant glances——

Joseph Surface Nay, nay, sir, this is no jest.

Charles Surface Egad, I'm serious. Don't you remember one day when I called here——

Joseph Surface Nay, prithee, Charles——

Charles Surface And found you together——

Joseph Surface Zounds, sir! I insist——

Charles Surface And another time when your servant——

Joseph Surface Brother, brother, a word with you!—[*Aside.*] Gad, I must stop him.

Charles Surface Informed, I say, that——

Joseph Surface Hush! I beg your pardon, but Sir Peter has overheard all we have been saying. I knew you could clear yourself or I should not have consented.

Charles Surface How, Sir Peter! where is he?

Joseph Surface Softly; there! [*Points to the closet.*]

Charles Surface Oh, 'fore Heaven, I'll have him out. Sir Peter, come forth!

Joseph Surface No, no——

ACT IV Charles Surface I say, Sir Peter, come into court.—[*Pulls in Sir Peter.*]—
SCENE 3 What, my old guardian!—What! turn inquisitor, and take evidence incog?

Sir Peter Give me your hand, Charles—I believe I have suspected you wrongfully; but you mustn't be angry with Joseph—'twas my plan!

Charles Surface Indeed!

Sir Peter But I acquit you. I promise you I don't think near so ill of you as I did: what I have heard has given me great satisfaction.

Charles Surface Egad, then, 'twas lucky you didn't hear any more—wasn't it, Joseph?

Sir Peter Ah! you would have retorted on him.

Charles Surface Aye, aye, that was a joke.

Sir Peter Yes, yes, I know his honour too well.

Charles Surface But you might as well have suspected *him* as *me* in this matter, for all that—mightn't he, Joseph?

Sir Peter Well, well, I believe you.

Joseph Surface [*Aside.*] Would they were both out of the room!

Enter Servant, and whispers Joseph Surface.

Sir Peter And in future perhaps we may not be such strangers.

Servant Lady Sneerwell is below, and says she will come up.

Joseph Surface [*To the Servant.*] Lady Sneerwell! Gad's life, she mustn't come here. Gentlemen, I beg pardon,—I must wait on you downstairs: here is a person come on particular business.

Charles Surface Well, you can see him in another room. Sir Peter and I have not met a long time, and I have something to say to him.

Joseph Surface [*Aside.*] They must not be left together. [*To Charles.*] I'll send this man away, and return directly.—Sir Peter, not a word of the French milliner.

Sir Peter Oh, not for the world!—[*Exit Joseph.*]—Ah! Charles, if you associated more with your brother, one might indeed hope for your reformation. He is a man of sentiment.—Well, there is nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment!

Charles Surface Pshaw! he is too moral by half—and so apprehensive

of his good name, as he calls it, that I suppose he would as soon let a priest into his house as a girl.

Sir Peter No, no,—come, come,—you may wrong him.—No, no! Joseph is no rake, but he is no such saint in that respect either.—

[*Aside.*] I have a great mind to tell him—we should have a laugh.

Charles Surface Oh, hang him! He's a very anchorite, a young hermit.

Sir Peter Hark'ee—you must not abuse him: he may chance to hear of it again, I promise you.

Charles Surface Why, you won't tell him?

Sir Peter No—but—this way. Egad, I'll tell him.—[*Aside.*] Hark'ee, have you a mind to have a good laugh against Joseph?

Charles Surface I should like it of all things.

Sir Peter Then, i'faith, we will—I'll be quit with him for discovering me.—[*Whispers.*]—He had a girl with him when I called.

Charles Surface What! Joseph? You jest.

Sir Peter Hush!—a little French milliner—and the best of the jest is—she's in the room now.

Charles Surface The devil she is! [*Looking at the closet.*]

Sir Peter Hush! I tell you! [*Points to the screen.*]

Charles Surface Behind the screen! 'Slife, let's unveil her!

Sir Peter No, no—he's coming—you shan't, indeed!

Charles Surface Egad, we'll have a peep at the little milliner!

Sir Peter Not for the world—Joseph will never forgive me——

Charles Surface I'll stand by you——

Sir Peter Odds, here he is——

Joseph Surface enters just as Charles Surface throws down the screen.

Charles Surface Lady Teazle, by all that's wonderful!

Sir Peter Lady Teazle, by all that's damnable!

Charles Surface Sir Peter, this is one of the smartest French milliners I ever saw. Egad, you seem all to have been diverting yourselves here at hide and seek, and I don't see who is out of the secret.—Shall I beg your ladyship to inform me? Not a word!—Brother, will you be pleased to explain this matter? What! is Morality dumb too?—Sir Peter, though I found you in the dark, perhaps you are not so

ACT IV
SCENE 3

now! All mute!—Well—though I can make nothing of the affair, I suppose you perfectly understand one another—so I'll leave you to yourselves—[*Going.*] Brother, I'm sorry to find you have given that worthy man grounds for so much uneasiness.—Sir Peter! there's nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment! [*Exit Charles. They stand for some time looking at each other.*]

Joseph Surface Sir Peter—notwithstanding—I confess—that appearances are against me—if you will afford me your patience—I make no doubt—but I shall explain everything to your satisfaction.

Sir Peter If you please, sir.

Joseph Surface The fact is, sir—that Lady Teazle, knowing my pretensions to your ward, Maria—I say, sir,—Lady Teazle, being apprehensive of the jealousy of your temper—and knowing my friendship to the family—she, sir, I say—called here—in order that—I might explain those pretensions—but on your coming—being apprehensive—as I said—of your jealousy—she withdrew—and this, you may depend on it, is the whole truth of the matter.

Sir Peter A very clear account, upon my word; and I dare swear the lady will vouch for every article of it.

Lady Teazle For not one word of it, Sir Peter!

Sir Peter How! don't you think it worth while to agree in the lie?

Lady Teazle There is not one syllable of truth in what that gentleman has told you.

Sir Peter I believe you, upon my soul, ma'am!

Joseph Surface [*Aside.*] 'Sdeath, madam, will you betray me?

Lady Teazle Good Mr. Hypocrite, by your leave, I will speak for myself.

Sir Peter Aye, let her alone, sir; you'll find she'll make out a better story than you, without prompting.

Lady Teazle Hear me, Sir Peter!—I came hither on no matter relating to your ward, and even ignorant of this gentleman's pretensions to her. But I came seduced by his insidious arguments, at least to listen to his pretended passion, if not to sacrifice your honour to his baseness.

Sir Peter Now, I believe, the truth is coming out indeed!

Joseph Surface The woman's mad!

Lady Teazle No, sir—she has recovered her senses, and your own arts have furnished her with the means.—Sir Peter, I do not expect you to credit me—but the tenderness you expressed for me, when I am sure you could not think I was a witness to it, has penetrated so to my heart, that had I left the place without the shame of this discovery, my future life should have spoken the sincerity of my gratitude. As for that smooth-tongued hypocrite, who would have seduced the wife of his too credulous friend, while he affected honourable addresses to his ward—I behold him now in a light so truly despicable, that I shall never again respect myself for having listened to him. [*Exit.*]

Joseph Surface Notwithstanding all this, Sir Peter, Heaven knows——

Sir Peter That you are a villain! and so I leave you to your conscience.

Joseph Surface You are too rash, Sir Peter; you *shall* hear me. The man who shuts out conviction by refusing to——

Sir Peter O damn your sentiments. [*Exeunt, Surface following and speaking.*]

ACT THE FIFTH

Scene I

The Library

Enter Joseph Surface and Servant.

Joseph Surface Mr. Stanley!—and why should you think I would see him? you must know he comes to ask something.

Servant Sir, I should not have let him in, but that Mr. Rowley came to the door with him.

Joseph Surface Pshaw! blockhead! to suppose that I should now be in a temper to receive visits from poor relations!—Well, why don't you show the fellow up?

Servant I will, sir.—Why, sir, it was not my fault that Sir Peter discovered my lady—

Joseph Surface Go, fool! [*Exit Servant.*—Sure Fortune never played a man of my policy such a trick before. My character with Sir Peter, my hopes with Maria, destroyed in a moment! I'm in a rare humour to listen to other people's distresses! I shan't be able to bestow even a benevolent sentiment on Stanley.—So! here he comes, and Rowley with him. I must try to recover myself, and put a little charity into my face, however. [*Exit.*]

Enter Sir Oliver and Rowley.

Sir Oliver What! does he avoid us!—That was he, was it not?

Rowley It was, sir. But I doubt you are come a little too abruptly.

His nerves are so weak, that the sight of a poor relation may be too much for him. I should have gone first to break you to him.

Sir Oliver Oh, plague of his nerves! Yet this is he whom Sir Peter extols as a man of the most benevolent way of thinking!

Rowley As to his way of thinking, I cannot pretend to decide for, to

do him justice, he appears to have as much speculative benevolence as any private gentleman in the kingdom, though he is seldom so sensual as to indulge himself in the exercise of it.

Sir Oliver Yet has a string of charitable sentiments, I suppose, at his fingers' ends.

Rowley Or rather, at his tongue's end, Sir Oliver; for I believe there is no sentiment he has more faith in than that 'Charity begins at home.'

Sir Oliver And his, I presume, is of that domestic sort; it never stirs abroad at all.

Rowley I doubt you'll find it so;—but he's coming. I mustn't seem to interrupt you; and you know immediately as you leave him, I come in to announce your arrival in your real character.

Sir Oliver True; and afterwards you'll meet me at Sir Peter's.

Rowley Without losing a moment. [*Exit.*]

Sir Oliver So! I don't like the complaisance of his features.

Enter Joseph Surface.

Joseph Surface Sir, I beg you ten thousand pardons for keeping you a moment waiting.—
—Mr. Stanley, I presume.

Sir Oliver At your service.

Joseph Surface Sir, I beg you will do me the honour to sit down—I entreat you, sir!

Sir Oliver Dear sir—there's no occasion——
[*Aside.*] too civil by half!

Joseph Surface I have not the pleasure of knowing you, Mr. Stanley; but I am extremely happy to see you look so well. You were nearly related to my mother, I think, Mr. Stanley?

Sir Oliver I was, sir;—so nearly that my present poverty, I fear, may do discredit to her wealthy children, else I should not have presumed to trouble you.



ROWLEY

ACT V
SCENE 1

Joseph Surface Dear sir, there needs no apology:—He that is in distress, though a stranger, has a right to claim kindred with the wealthy. I am sure I wish I was of that class, and had it in my power to offer you even a small relief.

Sir Oliver If your uncle, Sir Oliver, were here, I should have a friend.

Joseph Surface I wish he was, sir, with all my heart; you should not want an advocate with him, believe me, sir.

Sir Oliver I should not need one—my distresses would recommend me. But I imagined his bounty had enabled you to become the agent of his charity.

Joseph Surface My dear sir, you were strangely misinformed. Sir Oliver is a worthy man, a very worthy sort of man; but avarice, Mr. Stanley, is the vice of age. I will tell you, my good sir, in confidence, what he has done for me has been a mere nothing; though people, I know, have thought otherwise, and, for my part, I never chose to contradict the report.

Sir Oliver What! has he never transmitted you bullion—rupees—pagodas?

Joseph Surface O, dear sir, nothing of the kind!—No, no—a few presents now and then—china, shawls, congou tea, avadavats, and Indian crackers—little more, believe me.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] Here's gratitude for twelve thousand pounds!—Avadavats and Indian crackers!

Joseph Surface Then, my dear sir, you have heard, I doubt not, of the extravagance of my brother: there are very few would credit what I have done for that unfortunate young man.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] Not I, for one!

Joseph Surface The sums I have lent him!—Indeed I have been exceedingly to blame; it was an amiable weakness—however—I don't pretend to defend it,—and now I feel it doubly culpable, since it has deprived me of the power of serving *you*, Mr. Stanley, as my heart directs.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] Dissembler!—Then, sir, you can't assist me?

Joseph Surface At present, it grieves me to say, I cannot; but, whenever I have the ability, you may depend upon hearing from me.

Sir Oliver I am extremely sorry——

Joseph Surface Not more than I, believe me;—to pity without the power to relieve, is still more painful than to ask and be denied.

Sir Oliver Kind sir, your most obedient humble servant.

Joseph Surface You leave me deeply affected, Mr. Stanley.—William, be ready to open the door.

Sir Oliver Oh, dear sir, no ceremony.

Joseph Surface Your very obedient.

Sir Oliver Sir, your most obsequious.

Joseph Surface You may depend upon hearing from me, whenever I can be of service.

Sir Oliver Sweet sir, you are too good!

Joseph Surface In the meantime I wish you health and spirits.

Sir Oliver Your ever grateful and perpetual humble servant.

Joseph Surface Sir, yours as sincerely.

Sir Oliver [*Aside.*] Charles, you are my heir! [*Exit.*]

Joseph Surface This is one bad effect of a good character; it invites application from the unfortunate, and there needs no small degree of address to gain the reputation of benevolence without incurring the expense. The silver ore of pure charity is an expensive article in the catalogue of a man's good qualities; whereas the sentimental French plâte I use instead of it makes just as good a show, and pays no tax.

Enter Rowley.

Rowley Mr. Surface, your servant: I was apprehensive of interrupting you, though my business demands immediate attention, as this note will inform you.

Joseph Surface Always happy to see Mr. Rowley—[*Reads the letter.*]
How! Oliver—Surface!—My uncle, arrived!

Rowley He is, indeed: we have just parted—quite well, after a speedy voyage, and impatient to embrace his worthy nephew.

Joseph Surface I am astonished!—William! stop Mr. Stanley, if he's not gone.

Rowley Oh! he's out of reach, I believe.

ACT V Joseph Surface Why did not you let me know this when you came in
SCENE I together?

Rowley I thought you had particular business;—but I must be gone to inform your brother, and appoint him here to meet his uncle. He will be with you in a quarter of an hour.

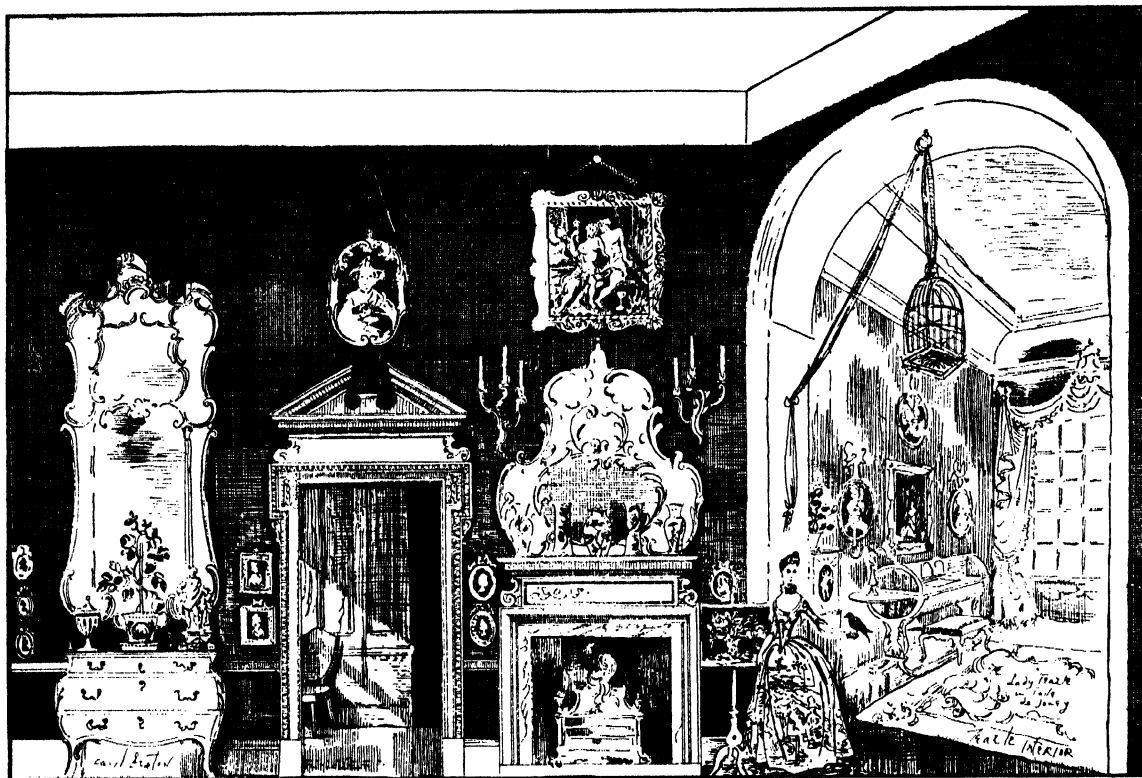
Joseph Surface So he says. Well, I am strangely overjoyed at his coming.—[*Aside.*] Never, to be sure, was anything so damned unlucky.

Rowley You will be delighted to see how well he looks.

Joseph Surface Ah! I'm rejoiced to hear it.—[*Aside.*] Just at this time!

Rowley I'll tell him how impatiently you expect him.

Joseph Surface Do, do; pray give my best duty and affection. Indeed, I cannot express the sensations I feel at the thought of seeing him.—[*Exit Rowley.*]—Certainly his coming just at this time is the cruellest piece of ill-fortune! [*Exit.*]



SIR PETER TEAZLE'S HOUSE INTERIOR

Scene 2

Sir Peter Teazle's

Enter Mrs. Candour and Maid.

Maid Indeed, ma'am, my lady will see nobody at present.

Mrs. Candour Did you tell her it was her friend Mrs. Candour?

Maid Yes, ma'am; but she begs you will excuse her.

Mrs. Candour Do go again,—I shall be glad to see her, if it be only for a moment, for I am sure she must be in great distress. [*Exit Maid.*]

Dear heart, how provoking! I'm not mistress of half the circumstances! We shall have the whole affair in the newspapers, with the names of the parties at full length, before I have dropped the story at a dozen houses.

Enter Sir Benjamin Backbite.

Oh, Sir Benjamin! you have heard, I suppose——

Sir Benjamin Of Lady Teazle and Mr. Surface——

Mrs. Candour And Sir Peter's discovery——

Sir Benjamin Oh! the strangest piece of business, to be sure.

Mrs. Candour Well, I never was so surprised in my life. I am so sorry for all parties, indeed.

Sir Benjamin Now, I don't pity Sir Peter at all: he was so extravagantly partial to Mr. Surface.

Mrs. Candour Mr. Surface! Why, 'twas with Charles Lady Teazle was detected!

Sir Benjamin No such thing!—Mr. Surface is the gallant.

Mrs. Candour No, no! Charles is the man. 'Twas Mr. Surface brought Sir Peter on purpose to discover them.

Sir Benjamin I tell you I had it from one——

Mrs. Candour And I have it from one——

Sir Benjamin Who had it from one, who had it——

Mrs. Candour From one immediately——but here comes Lady Sneerwell; perhaps she knows the whole affair.

Enter Lady Sneerwell.

ACT V
SCENE 2

Lady Sneerwell So, my dear Mrs. Candour, here's a sad affair of our friend Teazle.

Mrs. Candour Aye, my dear friend, who could have thought it?

Lady Sneerwell Well, there is no trusting appearances; though, indeed, she was always too lively for me.

Mrs. Candour To be sure, her manners were a little too free: but she was very young!

Lady Sneerwell And had, indeed, some good qualities.

Mrs. Candour So she had, indeed. But have you heard the particulars?

Lady Sneerwell No; but everybody says that Mr. Surface——

Sir Benjamin Aye, there; I told you Mr. Surface was the man.

Mrs. Candour No, no, indeed; the assignation was with Charles.

Lady Sneerwell With Charles! You alarm me, Mrs. Candour!

Mrs. Candour Yes, yes, he was the lover. Mr. Surface—do him justice—was only the informer.

Sir Benjamin Well, I'll not dispute with you,

Mrs. Candour; but, be it which it may, I hope that Sir Peter's wound will not——

Mrs. Candour Sir Peter's wound! O mercy!

I didn't hear a word of their fighting.

Lady Sneerwell Nor I, a syllable.

Sir Benjamin No! what, no mention of the duel?

Mrs. Candour Not a word.

Sir Benjamin Oh Lord, yes, yes: they fought before they left the room.

Lady Sneerwell Pray, let us hear.

Mrs. Candour Aye, do oblige us with the duel.

Sir Benjamin 'Sir,' says Sir Peter, immediately after the discovery, 'you are a most ungrateful fellow.'

Mrs. Candour Aye, to Charles——

Sir Benjamin No, no—to Mr. Surface—'a most ungrateful fellow; and old as I am, sir,' says he, 'I insist on immediate satisfaction.'



SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE

Mrs. Candour Aye, that must have been to Charles; for 'tis very unlikely Mr. Surface should go fight in his own house.

ACT V
SCENE 2

Sir Benjamin Gad's life, ma'am, not at all—'Giving me immediate satisfaction.' On this, ma'am, Lady Teazle, seeing Sir Peter in such danger, ran out of the room in strong hysterics, and Charles after her, calling out for hartshorn and water; then, madam, they began to fight with swords——

Enter Crabtree.

Crabtree With pistols, nephew—pistols: I have it from undoubted authority.

Mrs. Candour Oh, Mr. Crabtree, then it is all true!

Crabtree Too true, indeed, madam, and Sir Peter dangerously wounded——

Sir Benjamin By a thrust in *segoon* quite through his left side——

Crabtree By a bullet lodged in the thorax.

Mrs. Candour Mercy on me! Poor Sir Peter!

Crabtree Yes, madam; though Charles would have avoided the matter, if he could.

Mrs. Candour I knew Charles was the person.

Sir Benjamin My uncle, I see, knows nothing of the matter.

Crabtree But Sir Peter taxed him with the basest ingratitude.

Sir Benjamin That I told you, you know——

Crabtree Do, nephew, let me speak! and insisted on immediate——

Sir Benjamin Just as I said——

Crabtree Odds life, nephew, allow others to know something too. A pair of pistols lay on the bureau (for Mr. Surface, it seems, had come home the night before late from Salthill, where he had been to see the Montem with a friend, who has a son at Eton), so, unluckily, the pistols were left charged.

Sir Benjamin I heard nothing of this.

Crabtree Sir Peter forced Charles to take one, and they fired, it seems, pretty nearly together. Charles's shot took place, as I tell you, and Sir Peter's missed; but what is very extraordinary, the ball struck against a little bronze Pliny that stood over the fireplace, grazed out of the

ACT V.
SCENE 2

window at a right angle, and wounded the postman, who was just coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire.

Sir Benjamin My uncle's account is more circumstantial, I must confess; but I believe mine is the true one, for all that.

Lady Sneerwell [*Aside.*] I am more interested in this affair than they imagine, and must have better information. [*Exit.*]

Sir Benjamin [*After a pause, looking at each other.*] Ah! Lady Sneerwell's alarm is very easily accounted for.

Crabtree Yes, yes, they certainly *do* say—but that's neither here nor there.

Mrs. Candour But, pray, where is Sir Peter at present?

Crabtree Oh! they brought him home, and he is now in the house, though the servants are ordered to deny him.

Mrs. Candour I believe so, and Lady Teazle, I suppose, attending him.

Crabtree Yes, yes; and I saw one of the faculty enter just before me.

Sir Benjamin Hey! who comes here?

Crabtree Oh, this is he: the physician, depend on't.

Mrs. Candour Oh, certainly: it must be the physician; and now we shall know.

Enter Sir Oliver.

Crabtree Well, doctor, what hopes?

Mrs. Candour Aye, doctor, how's your patient?

Sir Benjamin Now, doctor, isn't it a wound with a small sword?

Crabtree A bullet lodged in the thorax, for a hundred.

Sir Oliver Doctor! a wound with a small sword! and a bullet in the thorax! What! are you mad, good people?

Sir Benjamin Perhaps, sir, you are not a doctor?

Sir Oliver Truly, I am to thank you for my degree if I am.

Crabtree Only a friend of Sir Peter's, then, I presume. But, sir, you must have heard of his accident?

Sir Oliver Not a word!

Crabtree Not of his being dangerously wounded?

Sir Oliver The devil he is!

Sir Benjamin Run through the body——

Crabtree Shot in the breast—
Sir Benjamin By one Mr. Surface——
Crabtree Aye, the younger.

Sir Oliver Hey! what the plague! you seem to differ strangely in your accounts: however, you agree that Sir Peter is dangerously wounded.

Sir Benjamin Oh, yes, we agree there.

Crabtree Yes, yes, I believe there can be no doubt of that.

Sir Oliver Then, upon my word, for a person in that situation, he is the most imprudent man alive; for here he comes, walking as if nothing at all was the matter.

Enter Sir Peter.

Odds heart, Sir Peter, you are come in good time, I promise you, for we had just given you over.

Sir Benjamin Egad, uncle, this is the most sudden recovery!

Sir Oliver Why, man, what do you out of bed with a small sword through your body, and a bullet lodged in your thorax?

Sir Peter A small sword, and a bullet!

Sir Oliver Aye, these gentlemen would have killed you without law, or physic, and wanted to dub me a doctor, to make me an accomplice.

Sir Peter Why, what is all this?

Sir Benjamin We rejoice, Sir Peter, that the story of the duel is not true, and are sincerely sorry for your other misfortune.

Sir Peter [*Aside.*] So, so; all over the town already.

Crabtree Though, Sir Peter, you were certainly vastly to blame to marry at all at your years.



CRABTREE

ACT V. Sir Peter Sir, what business is that of yours?
 SCENE 2 Mrs. Candour Though, indeed, as Sir Peter made so good a husband,
 he's very much to be pitied.
 Sir Peter Plague on your pity, ma'am! I desire none of it.
 Sir Benjamin However, Sir Peter, you must not mind the laughing and
 jests you will meet with on the occasion.
 Sir Peter Sir, sir, I desire to be master in my own house.
 Crabtree 'Tis no uncommon case, that's one comfort.
 Sir Peter I insist on being left to myself: without ceremony—I insist
 on your leaving my house directly.
 Mrs. Candour Well, well, we are going, and depend on't we'll make
 the best report of you we can. [*Exit.*]
 Sir Peter Leave my house!
 Crabtree And tell how hardly you've been treated. [*Exit.*]
 Sir Peter Leave my house!
 Sir Benjamin And how patiently you bear it. [*Exit.*]
 Sir Peter Fiends! vipers! furies! Oh! that their own venom would
 choke them!
 Sir Oliver They are very provoking, indeed, Sir Peter.
Enter Rowley.
 Rowley I heard high words: what has ruffled you, Sir Peter?
 Sir Peter Pshaw! what signifies asking? Do I ever pass a day without
 my vexations?
 Sir Oliver Well, I'm not inquisitive. I come only to tell you, that I
 have seen both my nephews in the manner we proposed.
 Sir Peter A precious couple they are!
 Rowley Yes, and Sir Oliver is convinced that your judgment was right,
 Sir Peter.
 Sir Oliver Yes, I find Joseph is indeed the man, after all.
 Rowley Aye, as Sir Peter says, he is a man of sentiment.
 Sir Oliver And acts up to the sentiments he professes.
 Rowley It certainly is edification to hear him talk.
 Sir Oliver Oh, he's a model for the young men of the age!—But
 how's this, Sir Peter? you don't join us in your friend Joseph's praise,
 as I expected.



Joseph

Sir Peter Sir Oliver, we live in a damned wicked world, and the fewer we praise the better.

Rowley What! do you say so, Sir Peter, who were never mistaken in your life?

Sir Peter Pshaw! Plague on you both! I see by your sneering you have heard the whole affair. I shall go mad among you!

Rowley Then, to fret you no longer, Sir Peter, we are indeed acquainted with it all. I met Lady Teazle coming from Mr. Surface's so humbled, that she deigned to request me to be her advocate with you.

Sir Peter And does Sir Oliver know all, too?

Sir Oliver Every circumstance.

Sir Peter What, of the closet—and the screen, hey?

Sir Oliver Yes, yes, and the little French milliner. Oh, I have been vastly diverted with the story! Ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter 'Twas very pleasant.

Sir Oliver I never laughed more in my life, I assure you: ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter Oh, vastly diverting! Ha! ha! ha!

Rowley To be sure, Joseph with his sentiments: ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter Yes, yes, his sentiments! Ha! ha! ha! A hypocritical villain!

Sir Oliver Aye, and that rogue Charles to pull Sir Peter out of the closet: ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter Ha! ha! 'twas devilish entertaining, to be sure!

Sir Oliver Ha! ha! ha! Egad, Sir Peter, I should like to have seen your face when the screen was thrown down: ha! ha!

Sir Peter Yes, yes, my face when the screen was thrown down: ha! ha! ha! Oh, I must never show my head again!

Sir Oliver But come, come, it isn't fair to laugh at you neither, my old friend; though, upon my soul, I can't help it.

Sir Peter Oh, pray don't restrain your mirth on my account; it does not hurt me at all! I laugh at the whole affair myself. Yes, yes, I think being a standing jest for all one's acquaintance a very happy situation. Oh, yes, and then of a morning to read the paragraphs about Mr. S——, Lady T——, and Sir P——, will be so diverting! I shall

ACT V . certainly leave town tomorrow and never look mankind in the face
SCENE 2 again.

Rowley Without affectation, Sir Peter, you may despise the ridicule of fools: but I see Lady Teazle going towards the next room; I am sure you must desire a reconciliation as earnestly as she does.

Sir Oliver Perhaps my being here prevents her coming to you. Well, I'll leave honest Rowley to mediate between you; but he must bring you all presently to Mr. Surface's, where I am now returning, if not to reclaim a libertine, at least to expose hypocrisy.

Sir Peter Ah, I'll be present at your discovering yourself there with all my heart; though 'tis a vile unlucky place for discoveries.

Rowley We'll follow. [*Exit Sir Oliver.*]

Sir Peter She is not coming here, you see, Rowley.

Rowley No, but she has left the door of that room open, you perceive. See, she's in tears.

Sir Peter Certainly a little mortification appears very becoming in a wife. Don't you think it will do her good to let her pine a little?

Rowley Oh, this is ungenerous in you!

Sir Peter Well, I know not what to think. You remember the letter I found of hers evidently intended for Charles?

Rowley A mere forgery, Sir Peter, laid in your way on purpose. This is one of the points which I intend Snake shall give you conviction on.

Sir Peter I wish I were once satisfied of that. She looks this way. What a remarkably elegant turn of the head she has! Rowley, I'll go to her.

Rowley Certainly.

Sir Peter Though when it is known that we are reconciled people will laugh at me ten times more.

Rowley Let them laugh, and retort their malice only by showing them you are happy in spite of it.

Sir Peter I'faith, so I will! and if I'm not mistaken, we may yet be the happiest couple in the country.

Rowley Nay, Sir Peter, he who once lays aside suspicion——

Sir Peter Hold, my dear Rowley! if you have any regard for me, never let me hear you utter anything like a sentiment: I have had enough of them to serve me the rest of my life. [*Exeunt.*]

Scene 3

The Library

Enter Joseph Surface and Lady Sneerwell.

Lady Sneerwell Impossible! Will not Sir Peter immediately be reconciled to Charles and of consequence no longer oppose his union with Maria? The thought is distraction to me.

Joseph Surface Can passion furnish a remedy?

Lady Sneerwell No, nor cunning either. Oh! I was a fool, an idiot, to league with such a blunderer!

Joseph Surface Sure, Lady Sneerwell, I am the greatest sufferer; yet you see I bear the accident with calmness.

Lady Sneerwell Because the disappointment doesn't reach your heart; your interest only attached you to Maria. Had you felt for her what I have for that ungrateful libertine, neither your temper nor hypocrisy, could prevent your showing the sharpness of your vexation.

Joseph Surface But why should your reproaches fall on me for this disappointment?

Lady Sneerwell Are you not the cause of it? What had you to bate in your pursuit of Maria to pervert Lady Teazle by the way? Had you not a sufficient field for your roguery in blinding Sir Peter, and supplanting your brother, but you must endeavour to seduce his wife? I hate such an avarice of crimes; 'tis an unfair monopoly, and never prospers.

Joseph Surface Well, I admit I have been to blame. I confess I deviated from the direct road of wrong, but I don't think we're so totally defeated neither.

Lady Sneerwell No!

Joseph Surface You tell me you have made a trial of Snake since we met, and that you still believe him faithful to us.

Lady Sneerwell I do believe so.

Joseph Surface And that he had undertaken, should it be necessary, to swear and prove, that Charles is at this time contracted by vows

ACT V . and honour to your ladyship which some of his former letters to you
SCENE 3 will serve to support.

Lady Sneerwell This, indeed, might have assisted.

Joseph Surface Come, come; it is not too late yet. [*Knocking at the door.*] But hark! this is probably my uncle, Sir Oliver: retire to that room; we'll consult further when he is gone.

Lady Sneerwell Well, but if *he* should find you out too?

Joseph Surface Oh, I have no fear of that. Sir Peter will hold his tongue for his own credit's sake—and you may depend on it I shall soon discover Sir Oliver's weak side!

Lady Sneerwell I have no diffidence of your abilities! only be constant to one roguery at a time. [*Exit Lady Sneerwell.*]

Joseph Surface I will, I will. So! 'tis confounded hard, after such bad fortune, to be baited by one's confederate in evil. Well, at all events my character is so much better than Charles's, that I certainly—hey!—what!—this is not Sir Oliver, but old Stanley again. Plague on't that he should return to tease me just now. I shall have Sir Oliver come and find him here—and——

Enter Sir Oliver.

Gad's life, Mr. Stanley, why have you come back to plague me at this time? You must not stay now, upon my word.

Sir Oliver Sir, I hear your uncle Oliver is expected here, and though he has been so penurious to you, I'll try what he'll do for me.

Joseph Surface Sir, 'tis impossible for you to stay now, so I must beg——Come any other time, and I promise you, you shall be assisted.

Sir Oliver No: Sir Oliver and I must be acquainted.

Joseph Surface Zounds, sir! then I insist on your quitting the room directly.

Sir Oliver Nay, sir——

Joseph Surface Sir, I insist on't: here, William! show this gentleman out. Since you compel me, sir, not one moment—this is such insolence!

Enter Charles.

Charles Surface Hey day! what's the matter now! What the devil

have you got hold of my little broker here? Zounds, brother, don't hurt little Premium. What's the matter, my little fellow?

Joseph Surface So! he has been with you too, has he?

Charles Surface To be sure he has. Why, he's as honest a little—but sure, Joseph, you have not been borrowing money too, have you?

Joseph Surface Borrowing! No! But, brother, you know we expect Sir Oliver here every——

Charles Surface O Gad, that's true! Noll mustn't find the little broker here, to be sure.

Joseph Surface Yet Mr. Stanley insists——

Charles Surface Stanley! why his name's Premium.

Joseph Surface No, no, Stanley.

Charles Surface No, no, Premium.

Joseph Surface Well, no matter which—but——

Charles Surface Aye, aye, Stanley or Premium, 'tis the same thing as you say; for I suppose he goes by half a hundred names, besides A. B. at the coffee-houses. [*Knocking.*]

Joseph Surface 'Sdeath! here's Sir Oliver at the door. Now I beg, Mr. Stanley——

Charles Surface Aye, aye, and I beg, Mr. Premium——

Sir Oliver Gentlemen——

Joseph Surface Sir, by Heaven you shall go!

Charles Surface Aye, out with him, certainly!

Sir Oliver This violence——

Joseph Surface 'Tis your own fault.

Charles Surface Out with him, to be sure. [*Both forcing Sir Oliver out.*]

Enter Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, Maria, and Rowley.

Sir Peter My old friend, Sir Oliver—hey! What in the name of wonder—here are dutiful nephews—assault their uncle at a first visit!

Lady Teazle Indeed, Sir Oliver, 'twas well we came in to release you.

Rowley Truly, it was; for I perceive, Sir Oliver, the character of old Stanley was not a protection to you.

Sir Oliver Nor of Premium either: the necessities of the former could

ACT V . not extort a shilling from that benevolent gentleman; and now, egad,
 SCENE 3 I stood a chance of faring worse than my ancestors, and being knocked
 down without being bid for.

Joseph Surface Charles!

Charles Surface Joseph!

Joseph Surface 'Tis now complete!

Charles Surface Very!

Sir Oliver Sir Peter, my friend, and Rowley, too, look on that elder
 nephew of mine. You know what he has already received from my
 bounty; and you also know how gladly I would have regarded half
 my fortune as held in trust for him: judge then my disappointment in
 discovering him to be destitute of truth, charity, and gratitude.

Sir Peter Sir Oliver, I should be more surprised at this declaration, if
 I had not myself found him to be selfish, treacherous, and hypocritical.

Lady Teazle And if the gentleman pleads not guilty to these, pray let
 him call *me* to his character.

Sir Peter Then, I believe, we need add no more: if he knows himself,
 he will consider it as the most perfect punishment, that he is known to
 the world.

Charles Surface [*Aside.*] If they talk this way to Honesty, what will
 they say to me, by-and-by?

Sir Oliver As for that prodigal, his brother, there——

Charles Surface [*Aside.*] Aye, now comes my turn: the damned family
 pictures will ruin me.

Joseph Surface Sir Oliver—uncle, will you honour me with a hearing?

Charles Surface [*Aside.*] Now if Joseph would make one of his long
 speeches I might recollect myself a little.

Sir Peter [*To Joseph.*] I suppose you would undertake to justify your-
 self entirely?

Joseph Surface I trust I could.

Sir Oliver Pshaw!—nay if you desert your roguery in this distress and
 try to be justified, you have even less principle than I thought you had.
 [*Turns from him in contempt.*] Well, sir [*to Charles*], and you could justify
 yourself too, I suppose?

Charles Surface Not that I know of, Sir Oliver.

Sir Oliver What!—Little Premium has been let too much into the secret, I presume?

Charles Surface True, sir; but they were *family* secrets, and should not be mentioned again, you know.

Rowley Come, Sir Oliver, I know you cannot speak of Charles's follies with anger.

Sir Oliver Odds heart, no more I can: nor with gravity either.—Sir Peter, do you know, the rogue bargained with me for all his ancestors; sold me judges and generals by the foot and maiden aunts as cheap as broken china.

Charles Surface To be sure, Sir Oliver, I did make a little fret with the family canvas, that's the truth on't. My ancestors may certainly rise in judgment against me, there's no denying it; but believe me sincere when I tell you—and upon my soul I would not say so if I was not—that if I do not appear mortified at the exposure of my follies, it is because I feel at this moment the warmest satisfaction in seeing you, my liberal benefactor.

Sir Oliver Charles, I believe you; give me your hand again: the ill-looking little fellow over the settee has made your peace.

Charles Surface Then, sir, my gratitude to the original is still increased.

Lady Teazle Yet, I believe, Sir Oliver, here is one whom Charles is still more anxious to be reconciled to.

Sir Oliver Oh, I have heard of his attachment there; and with the young lady's pardon, if I construe right—that blush——

Sir Peter Well, child, speak your sentiments!

Maria Sir, I have little to say, but that



MRS. CANDOUR Act V

ACT V · I shall rejoice to hear that he is happy; for me—whatever claim I had
SCENE 3 to his affection, I willingly resign to one who has a better title.

Charles Surface How, Maria!

Sir Peter Hey day! what's the mystery now?—While he appeared an incorrigible rake, you would give your hand to no one else; and now that he is likely to reform, I'll warrant you won't have him.

Maria His own heart and Lady Sneerwell know the cause.

Charles Surface Lady Sneerwell!

Joseph Surface Brother, it is with great concern I am obliged to speak on this point, but my regard to justice compels me, and Lady Sneerwell's injuries can no longer be concealed. [*Goes to door.*]

Enter Lady Sneerwell.

All Lady Sneerwell!

Sir Peter So! another French milliner! Egad, he has one in every room in the house, I suppose.

Lady Sneerwell Ungrateful Charles! Well may you be surprised, and feel for the indelicate situation your perfidy has forced me into.

Charles Surface Pray, uncle, is this another plot of yours? For, as I have life, I don't understand it.

Joseph Surface I believe, sir, there is but the evidence of one person more necessity to make it extremely clear.

Sir Peter And that person, I imagine, is Mr. Snake. Rowley, you were perfectly right to bring him with us, and pray let him appear.

Rowley Walk in, Mr. Snake.

Enter Snake.

I thought his testimony might be wanted: however, it happens unluckily, that he comes to confront Lady Sneerwell, and not to support her.

Lady Sneerwell A villain! Treacherous to me at last!—Speak, fellow; have you too conspired against me?

Snake I beg your ladyship ten thousand pardons; you paid me extremely liberally for the lie in question; but I unfortunately have been offered double to speak the truth.

Sir Peter Plot and counterplot, egad! I wish your ladyship joy of the success of your negotiation.



Lady
SNEEPEWELL.
ACT I

Lady Sneerwell The torments of shame and disappointment on you all!

Lady Teazle Hold, Lady Sneerwell—before you go, let me thank you for the trouble you and that gentleman have taken, in writing letters from me to Charles, and answering them yourself; and let me also request you to make my respects to the Scandalous College, of which you are president, and inform them, that Lady Teazle, licentiate, begs leave to return the diploma they granted her, as she leaves off practice, and kills characters no longer.

Lady Sneerwell You, too, madam—provoking—insolent—May your husband live these fifty years! [*Exit.*]

Sir Peter Oons! what a fury!

Lady Teazle What a malicious creature it is!

Sir Peter Hey! Not for her last wish?

Lady Teazle Oh, no!

Sir Oliver Well, sir, and what have you to say now?

Joseph Surface Sir, I am so confounded, to find that Lady Sneerwell could be guilty of suborning Mr. Snake in this manner, to impose on us all, that I know not what to say: however, lest her revengeful spirit should prompt her to injure my brother, I had certainly better follow her directly. [*Exit.*]

Sir Peter Moral to the last drop!

Sir Oliver Aye, and marry her, Joseph, if you can.—Oil and vinegar, egad! you'll do very well together.

Rowley I believe we have no more occasion for Mr. Snake at present?

Snake Before I go, I beg pardon once for all, for whatever uneasiness

I have been the humble instrument of causing to the parties present.

Sir Peter Well, well, you have made atonement by a good deed at last.

Snake But I must request of the company that it shall never be known.

Sir Peter Hey!—What the plague!—Are you ashamed of having done a right thing once in your life?

Snake Ah, sir! consider,—I live by the badness of my character; I have nothing but my infamy to depend on! and if it were once known that I had been betrayed into an honest action, I should lose every friend I have in the world.

ACT V . Sir Peter Here's a precious rogue!

SCENE 3 Sir Oliver Well, well,—we'll not traduce you by saying anything to your praise, never fear. [*Exit Snake.*]

Lady Teazle See, Sir Oliver, there needs no persuasion now to reconcile your nephew and Maria.

Sir Oliver Aye, aye, that's as it should be, and egad, we'll have the wedding tomorrow morning.

Charles Surface Thank you, my dear uncle!

Sir Peter What, you rogue! don't you ask the girl's consent first?

Charles Surface Oh, I have done that a long time—above a minute ago—and she has looked *yes*.

Maria For shame, Charles!—I protest, Sir Peter, there has not been a word.

Sir Oliver Well, then, the fewer the better;—may your love for each other never know abatement.

Sir Peter And may you live as happily together as Lady Teazle and I—intend to do.

Charles Surface Rowley, my old friend, I am sure you congratulate me; and I suspect that I owe you much.

Sir Oliver You do indeed, Charles.

Rowley If my efforts to serve you had not succeeded, you would have been in my debt for the attempt; but deserve to be happy, and you overpay me.

Sir Peter Aye, honest Rowley always said you would reform.

Charles Surface Why, as to reforming, Sir Peter, I'll make no promises, and that I take to be a proof that I intend to set about it, but here shall be my monitor—my gentle guide—ah! can I leave the virtuous path those eyes illumine?

Though thou, dear maid, shouldst waive thy beauty's sway,

Thou still must rule, because I will obey:

A humble fugitive from Folly view,

No sanctuary near but Love—

[*To the audience*]—and you;

You can, indeed, each anxious fear remove,

For even Scandal dies if you approve.

Epilogue

By Mr. COLMAN

Spoken by LADY TEAZLE

I, who was late so volatile and gay,
Like a trade wind must now blow all one way,
Bend all my cares, my studies, and my vows,
To one dull rusty weathercock—my spouse!
So wills our virtuous bard—the pye-ball'd Bayes
Of crying epilogues and laughing plays!
Old bachelors, who marry smart young wives,
Learn from our play to regulate your lives.
Each bring his dear to town, all faults upon her—
London will prove the very source of honour.
Plung'd fairly in, like a cold bath it serves,
When principles relax—to brace the nerves:
Such is my case—and yet I must deplore
That the gay dream of dissipation's o'er:
And say, ye fair, was ever lively wife,
Born with a genius for the highest life,
Like me, untimely blasted in her bloom,
Like me, condemned to such a dismal doom?
Save money—when I just knew how to *waste* it!
Leave London—just as I began to taste it!
Must I then watch the early crowing cock,
The melancholy ticking of a clock;
In the lone rustic hall for ever pounded,
With dogs, cats, rats, and squalling brats surrounded?
With humble curates can I now retire
(While good Sir Peter boozes with the squire),
And at backgammon mortify my soul,
That pants for loo, or flutters at a vole?
Seven's the main! Dear sound! that must expire,
Lost at hot cockles round a Christmas fire!

The transient hour of fashion too soon spent,
'Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content!
'Farewell the *pluméd* head, the cushion'd *tête*,
'That takes the cushion from its proper seat!
'The spirit-stirring drum—card drums I mean,
'Spadille—odd trick—pam—basto—king and queen!
'And you, ye knockers, that, with brazen throat,
'The welcome visitors' approach denote;
'Farewell!—all quality of high renown,
'Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious Town!
'Farewell! your revels I partake no more,
'And Lady Teazle's occupation's o'er!'
All this I told our bard; he smiled, and said 'twas clear,
I ought to play deep tragedy next year.
Meanwhile he drew wise morals from his play,
And in these solemn periods stalk'd away:
'Blest were the fair like you; her faults who stopt,
'And closed her follies when the curtain dropt!
'No more in vice or error to engage,
'Or play the fool at large on life's great stage.'



LADY TEAZLE EPILOGUE

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